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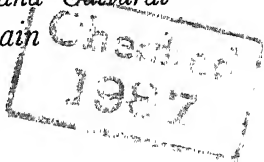
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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

*The Economic, Political, and Cultural
Structure of Britain*



BY

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PREFACE

THIS book originates from a course of lectures which I gave to Civil Servants in 1938 and 1939. Its primary object is to provide a basis for the understanding of modern problems, and particularly to provide some guide for those preparing for General Knowledge papers in the various civil service examinations. The contents of the book are largely based upon papers which have previously been set for such examinations. It is hoped that it will also prove of use to Sixth Forms who are pursuing a course of social studies, and find themselves bewildered by the complexity of the problems before them.

The book has obvious limitations. Certain specialised subjects, such as Art, Literature, and the Sciences, have been omitted, since their appeal is largely to the specialist. Nor, in view of the rapidly changing face of world politics, is there any mention of international affairs. There is today no lack of good outlines of recent world history, whilst there is a positive glut of topical books on the international situation. During the past year or so the public mind has been so occupied with the possibilities of war that it has tended to neglect domestic affairs. This book is a modest attempt at a corrective. In the space available it has of course been impossible even to attempt to deal exhaustively with any one subject; and my purpose has been to suggest lines of approach, and to provide, in the book lists at the end of each section, material for further study.

My indebtedness to the authors whose works I have quoted should be obvious to every reader. I should also

like to express my grateful thanks to the librarian and staff of the Polytechnic library, who have rendered me every assistance; and finally to my wife, without whose encouragement this book would never have been completed.

A. F. W. PRATT.

Hampstead,
July 1939.

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PART I
THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

CHAPTER I

CAPITAL, BANKING AND CURRENCY

THE wealth of a country or of an individual is frequently referred to as capital; but the common use of the term is loose and uneconomic. Capital is of two types:

(1) Circulating capital, or consumer's goods, which are immediately enjoyable and consumable, such as furniture and clothing.

(2) Fixed capital, or producer's goods, which are not an immediate source of satisfaction, such as raw materials, factories, railways.

The distinction is really one of degree as to the time when satisfaction or utility accrues, for it will be obvious that fixed capital will eventually produce circulating capital; yet the distinction is none the less important, since the methods of providing the two types of capital vary. Capital is really a surplus, whether it be merely of spare time, as in the most primitive communities, or of a set of claims upon goods and services. Thus the wages paid to labourers, and in fact all money, constitute only a claim upon the goods and services of the community.

This is the more easily realised when we remember that the trade of primitive society was conducted on the basis of barter; and that the use of the precious metals as coinage was adopted largely as a matter of convenience. Their durability, their scarcity, their small bulk relative to value, and perhaps even their universal attractiveness, made them most suitable as a medium of exchange. Their use today

as monetary units, since they are no longer of intrinsic value, rests largely upon convention. It follows that since money is only a medium to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, it is of no use unless it circulates freely and creates those claims. Hoarding does not add to the capital of the community, because the money hoarded is not put to any productive use. Other forms of saving however, since they all ultimately lead to investment, are in the nature of indirect spending. For they create capital goods, in the construction of which various claims on consumer's goods arise through the payment of wages. Sometimes so much saving takes place that the industrial equipment so built up produces more than the market demands, even including the extra claims on goods which have been created. This over-investment, and over-production, which has been a feature of our economic system, can be checked to some extent by regulating the interest rate so as to reduce investment; but business activity is today so linked with international finance, and so dependent upon the psychological reactions of business men, that the measure is rarely immediately effective.

Every new enterprise demands capital, and the question arises as to how this capital is raised. On the whole it is easier to raise fixed capital, for the security is more tangible and more durable. An individual, or a private firm, however, must generally be prepared to meet the necessary expenses of providing his fixed capital from his own resources; although a mortgage may be arranged with the fixed assets as security. Larger businesses are frequently organised as public limited companies, especially since the Limited Liability Act of 1862 limited the liability of any shareholder to the amount which he had invested. Such a company is able to invite the public to subscribe to its shares; the shares are quoted on the Stock Exchange, which keeps the public informed of the position of such companies, whilst the whole business of share issuing is

usually carried out by a company of underwriters. The shares issued may be of three types. Ordinary shares carry a variable rate of interest according to the amount of profit made by the company, and if the company does badly there may be no ordinary dividends. Preference shares carry a fixed rate of interest, and are so called because such shareholders must be paid before ordinary shareholders. Occasionally debentures are issued, which are a form of mortgage on the assets of the company, and upon which interest must be paid, irrespective of the fortunes of the company.

Circulating capital is more difficult to raise, since the security offered is not so good; and although it may be raised on the security of fixed capital assets, it has generally to be provided by the proprietors or shareholders of a business. Often a serious problem, especially in the establishment of a new business, is to raise the capital required for carrying large stocks, for under modern economic conditions stocks are bought in bulk and sold piecemeal. It is here that a credit instrument known as a Bill of Exchange proves of use. A bill of exchange is simply a promise to pay at some stated future time the amount on the bill; and whilst it is not readily accepted as currency, banks will be prepared to accept bills upon sound business organisations, and to discount them—that is, to pay to the seller the amount stated on the bill, less the current interest for the period which the bill has still to run. Bills of exchange are also extensively used in foreign trade, especially for the financing of shipments of goods whilst they are actually in transit.

We have noticed that it is the banks which are prepared to discount bills of exchange, or to make advances upon adequate security; and indeed one of the main functions of the bank today is in the financing of industry. As agencies for the collection of the savings of the community they accumulate large sums of capital. Since it is unlikely

that there will be a demand for all the capital deposited at banks by the depositors, it is general banking policy to keep a currency cover of about ten per cent to meet current withdrawals, and to invest the remainder. The difference between the interest which they pay depositors, and that which they charge borrowers, represents a large part of the profits of the banking business; and since this margin varies very little, banks are not so sensitive to periods of bad trade as are other business organizations. It is essential however that the cover which the banks hold for the advances which they have made should be liquid, easily realisable, such as good commercial paper which it has discounted, collateral security, or its own security such as government stock. Banks tend to lend more fully as their cash reserves are large; and although the rate of interest on long term loans is fairly steady, that on demand loans can fluctuate widely, and varies with the relative abundance of cash in the banks. By the use of credit instruments such as cheques and bills of exchange banks tend to create credit; and by their power of making or withholding an advance they affect the direction in which investment shall be made, and promote the effective use of capital.

- Banks also create part of the medium of exchange by the issue of bank notes payable on demand; and the obvious need for regulating the issue of such notes has led to the growth of central banks in most countries of the world. The Bank of England, founded in 1692, is regulated by the Bank Charter Act of 1844, which tended to concentrate the privilege of note issue into the hands of the central bank, and to insist upon a gold cover for the issue of all notes above a stated amount. This amount, known as the fiduciary issue, was fixed at £14,000,000 in 1844; but since then by the surrender of note issuing privileges by smaller banks, and by the increase in the wealth of the country, the fiduciary issue has increased, and was fixed

at £260,000,000 by the Currency and Banking Act of 1928. The gold reserve of the central bank, besides acting as a cover for the issue of notes above the amount of the fiduciary issue, is also used for settling the balance of indebtedness to foreign countries. To maintain this reserve the Bank adjusts its rate of discount, raising it when the reserve is small, lowering it when it is high. Thus a raising of the Bank Rate will eventually lead to less borrowing, less credit, less business, and lower prices within the country. The foreigner is tempted to buy because of low prices, but finds his export market restricted for the same reason. So gold flows into the country to pay for exports, and the reserve is increased.

The currency of a country is normally linked to gold in order that its relation to other currencies of the world shall be stabilised. When a country is on the gold standard, then its unit of currency is closely linked to a stated amount of gold; when that unit demands less precious metal in exchange, then the currency is said to be depreciated. This means that when England abandoned the gold standard in 1931 the pound sterling was worth fewer dollars and fewer francs, since the U.S.A. and France still remained on the gold standard. Conversely, the franc and the dollar became more valuable in terms of English currency, and American and French business men were tempted to buy from us. On the other hand a reversion to the gold standard, such as took place in this country in 1925, will tend to decrease our exports and encourage imports. It is generally argued by economists today that in reverting to gold parity in 1925 we overvalued the pound; that is, that the relationship between the pound sterling and units of other currencies did not reflect the relationship between internal and external price levels. Thus the pound bought less internally than it would do externally if changed into foreign currencies; and our exports were too highly priced. An increase in the value of currency such as we have

described is also favourable to creditors; so that the burden of taxation became heavier and industry suffered accordingly.

Under the international gold standard a fall in the value of gold causes a rise in the prices of commodities. Thus the discovery of gold deposits in California and Australia in the middle, and the opening of the Transvaal mines towards the end, of the nineteenth century, meant that gold was cheap and prices were high. A gradual upward movement of prices in the two decades before the war was succeeded by a violent upward trend during the war, when the demand for commodities was high. Since the war world prices have fallen rapidly, whilst the value of gold has appreciated. This is due to a number of interacting factors. The large transfers of gold on account of reparations and war debts led to a considerable flow of gold to the two main creditor countries, France and the U.S.A. Normally this gold reserve would have been used to expand currency and credit, and so raise internal prices. This would have discouraged exports of merchandise, and payments for imports, having to be made largely in bullion, would have led to gold flowing out of the country, and so to a readjustment of the situation. But neither country allowed its extra gold reserve to be so used; prices did not increase, and the gold became sterilized in the vaults of the banks of the two countries. The resulting dwindling gold reserves in other countries led to an abnormal fall in prices, which led to a decline of international trade, to considerable difficulty in balancing national budgets on the smaller money incomes of taxpayers, and to considerable unemployment. The only remedy was devaluation, a lowering of the value of the currency unit. So Great Britain abandoned the gold standard in 1931, to be followed by most of our dominions and the Scandinavian countries. Since then, the U.S.A.

and most countries of Western Europe have had to adopt some form of devaluation.

The old international gold standard has gone, largely because it could not secure reasonably stable prices. In its place we have a variety of types of currency, linked, it is true, to gold, but by much more flexible bonds. America and France are on a gold bullion standard; the dollar and the franc are worth less gold than they were, and although there is a legal limit to the extent of this devaluation, the law can widen the limit which it has created. Balances of international payments may be made in gold under this system, although the private individual cannot exchange notes for gold. The "sterling bloc" on the other hand, maintain a fairly stable relationship between the units of their various currencies, although the unit is free to fluctuate in terms of gold, subject to the limitations placed upon it by the Government. Payments of international balances in gold are severely restricted. A number of other countries, especially the South American states, suffered such a decline in exports after 1929 that they have virtually abandoned any link with gold, and their exchange rates are notoriously unstable. The method adopted by the sterling bloc is really that of a managed currency. For instance, the Exchange Equalisation Fund, created in 1932, enables the Treasury to deal in foreign exchange in the interests of stability. When the value of sterling moves up, it buys francs and dollars, exchanging them for gold; when sterling depreciates, it sells the gold and so supports the pound. Similar funds have been established in France and the U.S.A. It is unlikely that the old international gold standard will ever become general again. Whilst the higher value of gold since 1931 has led to more activity in gold mining, and to an increased supply, there are many countries with depleted gold reserves anxious to acquire an extra supply, particularly at a time when other forms of wealth appear so unreliable. Gold

has been almost withdrawn as a medium of international payments, and unless those countries who have hoarded useless gold reserves are prepared to lower their tariff barriers and accept goods as payment, it is improbable that it will become such a generally accepted medium of exchange again.

CHAPTER II

INCOMES AND OCCUPATIONS

ACCORDING to the census of 1931 about 47 per cent of the total population of this country could be classified as "gainfully occupied". The remaining 53 per cent was made up of schoolchildren, housewives, and a miscellaneous group of shareholders, financiers and the like; for the term "occupied" is taken to include the unemployed, who, under normal economic conditions, would be occupied. In order to obtain some idea of the economic condition of the workers of this country, it will be useful to adopt certain broad classifications of occupation.

The differentiation of occupations is, indeed, a fairly modern phenomenon. In the most primitive society there was presumably but one occupation—that of hunter; throughout the Middle Ages this country was predominantly agricultural, and the vast majority of the people worked on the land. As agriculture became more efficient, so other trade and professions grew up; whilst the technical advances which date from the time of the Industrial Revolution have meant that, since we could produce more goods with less labour, more men were released for activities other than manufacture. Then there grew up a large class of workers who performed services only indirectly connected with production—workers who formed the office staffs, who were connected with the transport and marketing of commodities rather than with the production of them. This distinction between those who make goods and those who perform services is fundamental; and, speaking generally, the more advanced any economic

organisation becomes, the larger is the proportion of people who perform services. To-day they form almost half of the working population, and there is every reason to believe that the proportion will increase.

The remaining half of the occupied population may be further classified into three main groups. There are first those who produce "consumers' goods", that is, goods which are intended for immediate consumption, such as foodstuffs; opposed to these are the producers of "capital goods", goods which are useful over an extended period of time, such as houses and ships. Finally, not necessarily distinct from these two groups, and often overlapping, come those who are engaged in export. The importance of these occupational classifications will be appreciated when we discuss the incidence of unemployment; when we realise, for instance, that unemployment is exceptionally high in two of these groups—those who produce capital goods, and those who work for export.

It must be realised that these divisions are arbitrary and approximate, for there are no accurate figures available. We can, however, obtain accurate figures of occupations by industries from the census returns: and from a study of these returns for the last thirty years some interesting facts emerge. Since the census of 1911 there has been considerable movement from one branch of industry to another. Thus the standardization and mass production of clothes has led to a decline in the clothing trade; the improved methods of agriculture and the change over from arable to dairy farming has contributed to a decline in agricultural employment. But the canning and food cooking industries show an increase in employment, and so does the tobacco industry. These increases are due to changes in social habits; whilst mechanical inventions are largely responsible for increased employment in the electrical industries, motor car manufacture, and chemical industries. The increased leisure of the post-war world

has made possible the increased employment of labour in the paper-making, printing and entertainment industries. Finally, there has been a considerable increase in the number of civil servants employed by both the Government and local authorities.

We have seen something of the occupations of our 21,000,000 workers, and of the changes of the last generation. But our view of their economic condition would be incomplete without some enquiry into their incomes. The national income is in reality the total of goods and services which are available for the people for any given period. Since money is the only common standard by which we can assess the value of these goods and services, we must estimate the national income in terms of money. There are, however, a few important qualifications which must be borne in mind. It is, for instance, impossible to assess the value of services performed by housewives, by householders in their own gardens, or by the host of voluntary workers. Again, income which is derived from pensions or from investment in Government Stock comes from the proceeds of taxation—i.e. from the national income; it is thus not a real addition to the national income. Finally the value of money changes from time to time, and this must be allowed for in drawing any conclusions.

Thus, whilst the estimated national income in 1911 was just under £2,000,000,000, and in 1935 just under £4,000,000,000, it does not mean that real income has doubled during that period. We must allow first for the increase in population—over 12 per cent—and secondly for changes in the level of prices. Allowing for these adjustments, we can say that real income per head has increased by over 20 per cent. In terms of money the national income to-day works out at about 33s. per head. But whilst we can say that real income has increased rapidly, yet it has done so during a period when a large proportion of the population has suffered a decline in the standard of living. It appears

as if the increase in real income has been mainly confined to a section of the population: and so we must enquire how the national income is divided.

The rich—possessors of incomes of £2,000 a year and over—number only 0.5 per cent of the population, and yet they take over 16 per cent of the national income. The middle classes, with incomes varying from £250 to £2,000 a year, number 9.5 per cent of the population, but take 28 per cent of the national income. So that the poorer classes, earning under £250 a year, have only 56 per cent of the national income, although they represent 90 per cent of the population. This great inequality is sometimes justified by the argument that large incomes are a reward for the risks of commerce, and that the rich are necessary in order to save for the nation. This assumes that profits represent the only incentive to enterprise, an assumption which many to-day would call in question; and it ignores the fact that if the poor had higher incomes they would be able to save. Admittedly, the figures quoted above are gross figures—they refer to incomes before taxes have been paid; and there have been considerable increases in both income tax and death duties. But, whilst income tax may press heavily upon the rich, it is heavier still upon those who earn just enough to pay tax, and barely enough to maintain their position. Indirect taxes and rates, moreover, fall equally upon rich and poor, and there can be no question as to which of these classes can better bear the burden. The fact that the state has done little to remedy this inequality of income is finally substantiated when we realise that there is to-day a greater proportion of people with large incomes than before the war.

Nor does there seem much possibility of any considerable increase in real incomes. Of the items on which the nation spends its money, food is by far the largest, for we spend over 8s. out of every £1 we earn on food; yet, by and large, food is cheaper to-day than ten years ago, and, with the present

policy of tariffs and subsidies, is more likely to become dearer than cheaper. There is room for reduction in our expenditure on houses (rent, rates, fuel, light, etc.) which represents over 15 per cent of our national expenditure; and if we can mechanise the building industry, there is a possibility of cheaper rents. The only way in which the national income can be considerably increased seems to be by utilising the labour represented by our 1,500,000¹ unemployed and that is a problem which has been with us since the war, and which appears to be no nearer solution to-day.

¹ This figure may be liable to considerable reduction in the immediate future on account of the intensive rearmament programme, though such reduction is unlikely to be permanent.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION

IN 1798 the Rev. T. R. Malthus published his book, *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it affects the Future of Society*. He was struck by a rapidly increasing population at a time when exhausting wars with France and a succession of bad harvests were leading to a decrease in food supply; and, arguing that population would increase with the means of subsistence, he suggested that a growing population would always press upon natural resources and so depress the standard of living. After his time, however, whilst the population continued to grow, the standard of living improved; and it was realised that the main effect of the Industrial and Agrarian revolutions of the eighteenth century was to increase our productive capacity. Three years after the publication of Malthus' essay the population of Great Britain was estimated to be nearly eleven millions; in 1931 it was nearly forty-five millions and yet the standard of living had increased.

The problem to-day is not one of over population, but one of a declining and ageing population. Whilst the population is continuing to increase, its rate of increase is declining. The average decennial increase per cent in the nineteenth century was 13.6; in the first three decades of this century it was 6.6. In other words, our rate of increase has been halved. This is admittedly due to a declining birth rate, which has dropped from 35 per thousand in 1875 to 14.7 per thousand in 1935. During the same period the death rate has also fallen, though

by no means to the same extent—from 22 per thousand to 12 per thousand. This latter figure is, as we shall see, due to the abnormal age distribution of the population, and to the comparatively small proportion of old people to the total population. A death rate of 12 per thousand means that the average age of death is over 80, and it is therefore unlikely that it will be maintained at this low level—particularly as the proportion of old people will almost certainly increase. Our crude survival rate, therefore, which is now 2.7 per thousand, will also decline until there are more deaths than births per thousand of population.

So far we have been dealing with established figures; any attempt to forecast future population trends must of necessity be based upon estimates. Yet these estimates can be fairly reliable. We know, for instance, that the number of women now under 30 years old is less than the number aged 15 to 45; so that in fifteen years' time there will be fewer women aged 15 to 45 (i.e. women of child-bearing age). Thus, unless more children are born to each woman, the birth rate will certainly decline. The fundamental factors are fertility and mortality rates; and Dr. Enid Charles has made an investigation of the effects of present trends in these rates upon the future of population.¹ Assuming that fertility and mortality rates remain as they were in 1933, she estimates that in 1985 the total population will be only 82 per cent of its present size; and that in 2035 it will be halved. Her conclusions are even more startling if we assume that the trends of fertility and mortality rates will continue for the next century as the figures for the last decade suggest; then by 1990 the population will be only twenty-five millions, and by 2035 it will be reduced to four millions. Neither set of figures

¹ *The Effect of Present Trends in Fertility and Mortality upon the Future Population of England and Wales and upon its Composition*, Enid Charles. Royal Economic Society. London. 1935.

takes any account of migration movements; but it is improbable that the results of any such movements will have any considerable effect upon the population. Nor will an improvement in mortality rates be of much avail, since the only vital figure is the mortality rate for women aged 15 to 45, and this is already low. There is hope, however, for an improvement in the maternal mortality rate, which is higher to-day than at the beginning of the century.¹

A decline in the total population is certain during the next century, although its effects will not become really serious for a generation or so. Much more serious, because more imminent, is the change in age composition of the population, which is even more certain than the decline in total population. We may divide the population into three groups, those under 15, the children; those between 15 and 60, the workers; and those over 60, the retired. Dr. Charles' estimates of the changes in these age groups can best be represented in the following tables:

Assuming fertility and mortality remaining as in 1933:

	Under 15	15-60	over 60
1935	23·2%	64·3%	12·5%
1945	19·6%	65·5%	14·8%
1995	16%	60%	24%

Assuming a continuance of present trends in these rates:

	Under 15	15-60	over 60
1935	23·2%	64·3%	12·5%
1945	17·8%	66·8%	15·4%
2035	3%	39%	58%

Thus the number of children will decrease, the number of workers at first increase slowly, and then decrease rapidly, whilst the number of old people will be doubled. A smaller proportion of workers will have fewer children but far more old people to support. It is the economic

¹ But see p. 26.

effects of the decline in population and of the change in age composition, that we must now examine.

There is a widespread belief that a fall in population will relieve the burden of unemployment; but it must be remembered that every individual is a consumer as well as a potential producer. There will thus be a reduction in the volume of total demand; whilst a fall in the birth rate would considerably reduce the demand from the group under 15 years old, who are consumers for some years before they enter the labour market. But unemployment is due not so much to insufficiency of demand as to changes in the nature of that demand; and it is this phenomenon of "structural unemployment" which will be most affected by changes in the composition of population. To give but one example, an ageing population will decrease the demand for baby foods, and increase that for bath chairs. If the working population were to remain stationary, whilst the demand for labour shifted its direction there would probably be a considerable amount of unemployment in certain industries, workers in which were not very adaptable. And if the total population remains stationary or declines, whilst technical improvements continue to accelerate production, then there will be no demand for increased productive capacity, and so no possibility of absorbing the unemployed. Furthermore, much of our unemployment to-day is due to cyclical trade depressions. A considerable influence in reviving trade after a depression has always been the increased demand which arises from a growing population; this was, for instance, one of the main reasons for the recovery of America after the crisis of 1929. A stationary or declining population will thus mean that the incentive to recovery will not be present, and so periods of cyclical depression will last longer.

On the other hand we must remember that the volume of unemployment since the war has been excessive; and

it is improbable that the unemployment resulting from a declining and ageing population will be heavier than we have already experienced. The burden of unemployment may be heavier, however, as it will fall upon a smaller population. The major problem at the moment is one of surplus productive capacity; with a declining population, and technical improvements in production this will become more serious. It looks as if an increasing amount of state intervention, of "planning", will be needed in order to make the necessary adjustments in our economic system.

A slow rate of population growth may increase the standard of living, for it may release productive resources hitherto used for capital equipment—such as building houses—for other purposes. But this advantage can be obtained from a slowly growing or a stationary population; and a declining population will add nothing further to it. Nor is the argument that family income will go further with fewer children so sound as it seems; for whilst the number of children will decrease, there will be more dependent old people to be supported. Whether these dependants are supported by the State directly, or by the individual, makes little difference. For there is no doubt that the changes in the productive resources of the community will be increased; that whilst national income is diminishing, there will still remain a huge and undiminished National Debt, and rapidly increasing charges for old age pensions. Poverty and destitution will increase among the older people, who, when they become unemployed, only too frequently are unemployable. There is, in fact, a strong argument for the introduction of a state scheme for compulsory superannuation to supplement the old age pension. Nor can we save at the other end of the scale; for whilst there will be fewer children to educate, the decline will be spread over the whole country and will affect children of all ages. We shall still need almost as many

schools and teachers; but over-crowding in education will be relieved.

We have outlined the position in England and discussed some of its probable effects. Before we discuss causes and remedies, it will be well to consider trends in world population movements. The white population of the world has increased from 155 millions in 1770 to 730 millions to-day; but the increase has not been at the same rate in all white nations, and there has been a considerable decrease in the fertility rate during the last fifty years. Thus the net reproduction rate (the average number of girls born to a newly-born girl in the course of her life) is low in most countries of Western Europe, and relatively high in Russia. If these rates remain constant the white population will continue to increase, and the white races will, during the next century, continue to constitute about one third of the population of the world. But there will be considerable changes in the proportions of the different peoples within the white races, and, before the end of the century, the Russians will probably constitute a majority. In view of the political importance attached to man power, this may become a vital factor in world politics. Both Germany and Italy, realising this, have made various efforts to increase the population. But in spite of taxing bachelors and childless couples, granting birth premiums and family allowances, increased social services and the like, annual births in Italy have been dropping ever since 1931. In Germany loans to newly married couples have resulted in an increase in births; but, since the fertility rate is lower there than in any other country of western Europe, this increase is due entirely to more marriages.

The causes of the present decline in population are well known. The spread of contraceptive knowledge during the last fifty years has enabled parents to control the size of their families and there is much to be said for

voluntary parenthood. But there seems no doubt that the main obstacle to large families lies in the economic penalties which parenthood involves. The rise in income levels and the spread of entertainment has, in a way, contributed to a declining birth rate; for parents are not prepared to incur deprivations which would interfere with their social life. Among the working classes popular education, by postponing the age at which children begin to earn money, has increased the burden on the parent. And apart from the financial and social deprivations suffered by parents, the children themselves may in a large family be deprived of many things, ranging from the necessities of life, like adequate food and clothing, to the so-called luxury of a good education. Finally, two and three-bedroomed houses at exorbitant rents, the aptly named "birthcontrol barracks," present a real difficulty in the rearing of a large family.

In considering possible remedies it must be remembered that no measures can hope to be effective which do not improve the economic position of parents relatively to that of childless couples. Thus, whilst the state has made some attempt to relieve the burden of parenthood by its income tax allowances, it has only touched the fringe of the problem. The majority of the people of this country do not earn sufficient to be liable for income tax; and for those who do, the allowance does not pretend to cover the cost of maintaining the child. Much might be done by the extension of social services, such as we have seen recently in the provision of cheap milk; but, unless we introduce a national system of nurseries, the social handicap of parenthood still remains. A positive financial inducement seems not only necessary, but just; and this is the crux of the proposal put forward by such advocates of family allowances as Seeböhm Rowntree and Eleanor Rathbone. Family allowances have already been introduced in France, Belgium, Italy, New Zealand and New

South Wales; whilst in many other countries allowances are made in a number of industries. The cost would have to be borne by the state; for with the present low income levels contributory insurance would be unjust, whilst to ask employers to bear the burden would be to encourage them to employ single men. It was estimated in 1930 that an allowance of 5s. per week for the first child, and 3s. per week for each subsequent child, to all families below the income tax level would cost £70 millions—not an overwhelming figure in these days of astronomical budgets. Seebohm Rowntree suggests that the real hardship comes in families of more than three dependent children; and for a time 42 per cent of children belong to such families. He would therefore suggest as a preliminary measure an allowance of 5s. per week for every dependent child over three; and the cost for all families would be only £10 millions.¹ That such a measure is necessary is itself an indictment of an economic system; but since a rise in income levels seems unlikely, and since it would not necessarily encourage parenthood, some scheme of family allowances appears essential.

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Sept. 1938. "Family Allowances." Seebohm Rowntree.

CHAPTER IV

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

THE condition of the health of the public has been the concern of the state for rather less than a century; and even during that period state control was spasmodic. Whether the growth of public health services in the nineteenth century was due to humanitarian motives, to considerations of national efficiency, or merely to the instinct of self-protection among the richer classes, it is significant that the first National Health Board was established after a series of cholera and smallpox epidemics. This Board, set up in 1848, was abolished ten years later; but local boards remained, and the idea that the public health was primarily the concern of local authorities was confirmed by the Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875. Not until 1919 did we have a Ministry of Health; and that is largely a co-ordinating body for the various local authorities, and has public health included as only one of its many duties. And yet today a recent estimate of the total cost to the nation of ill health puts the figure at £300,000,000; and this is probably a conservative estimate.¹

The service of public health has two main aspects; the curative and the preventive; the one concerned mainly with the provision of medical and hospital services, the other, much wider in its scope, embracing such social services as sanitation, housing, slum clearance, and, more recently, nutrition. Even the provision which the state makes for curative medicine is to-day by no means complete. Thus, although the National Insurance Act of

¹ P. E. P. *Report on the British Health Services*. 1936.

1911 provided a narrow range of medical and sickness benefits for workers, this provision has not been extended to their dependants, except for maternity benefits. There are, moreover, serious objections to the "panel" system, under which it appears difficult to obtain the services of a specialist, or the more expensive treatments, which, although not essential, may be extremely beneficial. Hospitals, too, are still mainly private institutions, supported by voluntary contributions, and often without adequate funds or accommodation. Even Medical Officers of Health are not always barred from practising privately; and many of them, serving more than one area, find the demands upon their time too exacting.

Recently, however, a new line of approach to the question of public health has been adopted. Whilst as early as the eighteenth century doctors who were also social reformers emphasised the connection between public health and environment, it is only in the twentieth century that attention has been drawn to the importance of adequate and well-balanced nutrition as a vital factor in the health of the public. This increased interest in nutrition is due to a number of factors. Falling birth rates and revelations made throughout Western Europe as a result of medical examinations of recruits during the last war, brought home the seriousness of the problem of ill health. The increase in our knowledge of the relations between health and diet has provided us with a number of valuable data; and since these discoveries were accompanied by a world wide glut of food, physicians and dieticians were able to suggest that in adequate nutrition lay the solution not only of the problem of ill health, but also of that equalising production and consumption. "It has been estimated that, if the undernourished classes in this country were able to enjoy a full diet, there would be an increased trade in foodstuffs amounting to about £200,000,000 a year, giving revived activity to British

farming without harming overseas trade or shipping”¹ The relation between farming and improved standards of nutrition will be considered in a later chapter;² it remains for us to deal with the available data concerning the health of the nation, its incidence on the various social classes, and its relation to nutrition.

There exists no adequate census of the health of the nation, and the data from which we must form our conclusions consist of death and birth rates, results of medical examinations for military service, and school medical examinations, and information concerning the causes of death which is not too reliable for our purpose. The general birth rate is less than half of what it was in the eighties of last century, and has been falling regularly. The death rate has also fallen, but to a smaller extent; consequently the crude survival rate (excess of births over deaths) has fallen from 13·3 per thousand in 1881-90 to 3·0 per thousand in 1931-4. Whilst the rate of infantile mortality—deaths at less than one year old—has been reduced by more than half in the last fifty years, the rate of maternal mortality is higher to-day than before the war, although it is now slightly decreasing. We have the smallest crude survival rate of any of the leading countries of the world except France and Sweden; and it looks as if we are approaching a stationary, if not a declining population.³ Within the country the death rate varies from area to area, being generally highest in South Wales and Scotland, and lowest in the Midlands and South Eastern Counties. There are also differences within each area between one town and another, and between rural and urban areas. There appears to be a definite correlation between death rates and unemployment, for the general rate is slightly higher in the distressed urban

¹ Colin Campbell, Chairman of the National Provincial Bank. Speaking at the annual meeting in January, 1936.

² See Chapter IX.

³ See Chapter III.

areas, whilst the infantile mortality rate is considerably higher.¹

The results of medical examinations of some two and a half million recruits during the last year of the war show that over 41 per cent of those examined were placed in the two lower grades—*i.e.* were definitely below the standard of normal health. Medical examinations of school-children, which are more reliable because more frequent and more recent, tend to substantiate this high figure. In routine inspections only some 35 per cent of the children examined presented some deviation from the normal physical standards in 1933. But, as Dr. M'Gonigle points out, this figure may be considerably exceeded in special investigations conducted in limited areas. Moreover Sir John Orr has pointed out (in his *Food, Health and Income*) that the children of the rich are, age for age, taller than those of the poor; and whilst this is partly due to hereditary causes, it is also the result of differences in standards of nutrition.

The human body has certain various needs for food. In addition to water, which is essential to life, they are:

1. Body warming foods carbohydrates, sugary and starchy foods.
2. Body building foods *a* First class protein—animal products, milk, cheese, butter.
 b Vegetable protein.
3. Supplementary foods Fats.
4. Mineral salts indispensable in small quantities for the good condition of the bony structures.
5. Vitamins which preserve the body from a number of specific diseases.

¹ For the foregoing figures and much of what follows I am indebted to G. D. H. & M. I. Cole. *Condition of Britain*, Chap. II. M'Gonigle & Kirby. *Poverty and Public Health*.

Most foods combine some or all of these constituents, milk being particularly valuable because of its natural balance. The energy value of food is commonly measured by the number of "calories" yielded by each gram of the food; and the Nutrition Committee of the British Medical Association has assessed the daily requirements of the average man in calories as 3,400 made up of

	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Calories</i>
First Class Protein	50 grams	205
Vegetable Protein	50 grams	205
Fat	100 grams	930
Carbohydrate	500 grams	2,050
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	700 grams	3,390
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Sir John Orr has estimated that, of a national income of £3,750 millions, about £1,075 millions are spent on food. This is equivalent to 9s. per head per week. Changes in total consumption of different foods show that the standard of nutrition has improved since 1909; thus there has been increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, butter and eggs, all of which are good body building and protective foods, and a decreased consumption of cereals, which are of high calorific but little protective value. Moreover, whilst the consumption of bread and potatoes is to-day almost uniform throughout the different income level groups, consumption of milk, eggs, fruit, vegetables, meat and fish rises with income. Sir John Orr has suggested the following approximate classification of income groups.¹

¹ I am indebted to the courtesy of Sir John Boyd Orr and of Messrs. Macmillan for permission to reproduce this table from Sir John Orr's *Food, Health, and Income*.

	Weekly Income per head	Average Weekly Ex- penditure on food per head	Population of Group in thousands	Percent- age of total
Group 1	Up to 10s.	4s.	4,500	10
Group 2	10s. to 15s.	6s.	9,000	20
Group 3	15s. to 20s.	8s.	9,000	20
Group 4	20s. to 30s.	10s.	9,000	20
Group 5	30s. to 45s.	12s.	9,000	20
Group 6	over 45s.	14s.	4,500	10

It thus appears that about 50 per cent of the population spend less than the average amount on food. From a consideration of the actual quantities of foodstuffs consumed by the various groups the following conclusions emerge. The average diet of the poorest group is deficient in every constituent examined; the second group is adequate in protein, fat and carbohydrates, but deficient in minerals, vitamins and total calories. Group 3 is deficient in several important minerals and vitamins, whilst even group 4 has barely enough calcium. The wealthiest group has a surplus of all the constituents considered. To raise the diet of the poorer groups to the same standard as that of the first group which is adequately nourished—*i.e.* Group 4—would involve increases in the consumption of the more expensive foods (such as milk, eggs, butter, fruit, vegetables and meat) varying from 12 to 25 per cent. To raise the diets to the standard of Group 6, which may be taken to represent the saturation point, would involve increased consumption varying from 29 to 124 per cent.

Dr. M'Gonigle conducted an investigation into the family budgets of 141 families in Stockton-on-Tees, with net incomes varying between 25s. and 80s. a week. After allowing for necessary expenses, the largest items of which were rent (20%) fuel and light, clothing and boots (10%

each), he estimated that less than 43 per cent of the income was available for expenditure on food. On the basis of the British Medical Association minimum diet (in which the cost of feeding an adult male was 5s. 11d. at the prices ruling in 1933) only the highest range of incomes—from 70s. to 80s. a week—could adequately provide the food required.

It thus appears that about 40 per cent of the population of this country is below the normal standard of health; and that a rather higher proportion is more or less seriously under-nourished. The available data is too scanty and too localised to enable any but the broadest generalisation to be made, but a correlation between health, nutrition and income levels seems at any rate probable. Since the raising of income levels, though desirable in many respects, will not necessarily lead to an increased expenditure on food, it would appear that what is needed is to ensure that the food supply of the nation is adequate for health, and is available at a price within the reach of the poorest. The solution of the problem of reconciling the interests of agriculture and public health would therefore seem to lie, not in reducing supply to fit a lower level of demand, but in raising the level of demand to fit our greatly increased powers of producing food. More effective measures are therefore needed to reduce costs of production, but above all of distribution; and in this connection some readjustment of national economic policies should be made so that no essential foods are taxed. Subsidies might profitably be introduced to lower the price of such essential foods as milk. Finally propaganda and education should endeavour to improve the spending habits and diet of the people, for malnutrition is due not only to poverty, but to ignorance.

Yet nutrition is only one aspect of the problem of national health, although an important one. The P.E.P. Report on the British Health Services suggests far reaching

reforms designed to raise the general standard of health. Better living and working conditions, more recreation, a sense of economic security, are all as essential as more and better food. Health should be studied from the aspect of prevention rather than cure, and is basically a problem of education. Creative health services, in which the general practitioner (who alone comes into contact with the environment of his patients) will play a much larger part, are of the essence of such a reform. Doctors should be regarded not as healers of disease so much as guardians of health; and their education should include training in more accurate diagnosis, and the provision of social and economic contacts which will fit them to become the medical advisers of a nation in good health.

CHAPTER V

UNEMPLOYMENT

SOME day, perhaps, we shall do something about unemployment. Yet for nearly twenty years the unemployment figures have been abnormally high; and state measures designed to remedy this have been palliative rather than remedial. The state has failed to realise that unemployment is merely a symptom of a badly adjusted economic system; that there can be no remedy for unemployment merely in terms of unemployment; and that drastic readjustment of that economic system provides the only permanent cure for unemployment.

In one sense unemployment is inevitable in any economic system. So long as man works in close contact with nature, so long will his productive capacity depend upon seasonal changes, famines, and vagaries of the weather. Such seasonal unemployment can be anticipated, and provided for by alternative occupations. Until the war this normal unemployment—which affected about 4 per cent of the working population—was a regular feature of our economic life, and was not very serious, but since 1929 unemployment figures have fluctuated between 10 per cent and 22 per cent of the insured population; as the insured population represents little more than half our total working population, these figures are probably an underestimate of the seriousness of the problem.

Unemployment can be attributed to no one cause. It is due to a number of closely related and interdependent factors, the collective effect of which is far reaching. Since the war it has been heaviest in those trades which produce

capital goods—ship building, iron and steel trades, engineering; in industries which are largely dependent upon export, such as textiles; and in industries which serve the producers of capital goods, like coal mining. The reasons for the decline in these industries are fairly obvious. When industry is booming, orders in constructional trades tend to rise sharply; but when a depression sets in, the demand for capital equipment ceases abruptly. Although the constructional trades prospered during the war, when they were inflated by the demand for munitions, the re-armament programme of recent years seems to have had only a slight effect on these industries. The coal industry is depressed because the demand for coal depends upon the industrial activity of railways and shipping—and this has decreased. In the textile trades unemployment has been due to the growth of competition in the Far East, the rivalry of artificial silk, and the development of competing textile industries in the U.S.A. and Europe. Almost half of our unemployment is concentrated in these basic industries of coal, shipbuilding, iron, steel and textiles; but unemployment in major industries tends to produce unemployment in the secondary and service trades also.

Pre-war unemployment, although it fluctuated, always remained within limits which were capable of being provided for by something like insurance; post war unemployment has assumed such large figures that the early attempts to provide for unemployment relief upon an actuarial basis soon broke down. The nature of this change in unemployment was not readily realised, and it was generally believed that with the return to prosperity the unemployed would again be absorbed into the labour market. This attitude was strengthened by belief in the theory of the "Trade Cycle". According to this theory periods of depression and prosperity alternate with a definite rhythm. Under conditions of increasing demand, prices tend to rise; since they rise more quickly than wages,

more profits are available for reinvestment in industry and good profits tempt the investor. When, however, wages catch up with prices, costs of production begin to rise. There is a general contraction of industrial activity and of credit; production decreases and unemployment ensues. Eventually stocks become so low that they must be replenished; buying starts again and there is a general increase in productive activity.

Some economists would argue that the motive force behind this trade cycle is purely psychological; others that credit restriction is mainly to blame for a slump; and still others that falling prices, due to a contracting gold supply, are the main cause of a depression. These arguments each concentrate on one aspect of the trade cycle: they ignore the facts that bankers only restrict credit because they believe further investment will be economically unproductive; and that with an increase in our productive capacity, falling prices may coincide with industrial prosperity. Another more tenable theory suggests that the reinvestment of profits is only justified under conditions of increasing demand: that since wages lag behind profits consumers' demand will not increase, for those who receive profits tend to spend too little on consumers' goods and too much on instruments of production.

The complexity of the problem is self-evident: there are almost as many theories to account for the cause of unemployment as there are economists, and we can do no more than outline the principal ones. The intricate structure of the economic system is in itself a cause, for the mechanism of production has become so highly complicated that adjustments between supply and demand are difficult. Those of our industries which in the nineteenth century specialised in production for a world market reaped the benefit then; but to-day they are the more liable to feel fluctuations in world trade. The specialisation of workers for one type of employment, and often for only one process

in an industry, has made them less adaptable, and seriously restricted the fluidity of labour. The organisation of workers into Trade Unions has certainly done much to safeguard their rights; but it has led to a rigidity of wage rates which does not make for an easy adjustment of the economic system. That system demands that there must be sufficient workers to carry on industry in its most prosperous periods; it follows that there must be a surplus of labour in slack periods. This will apply not only to seasonal changes in demand, but also to the alternations of prosperity and depression; whilst there is no way of anticipating the effects of changes in the nature of demand, of changes in technique, or of transfer of industry from one area to another.

These causes are operative under normal conditions; but post-war unemployment is abnormal, and demands special consideration. Much may be attributed to the war. Neutrals, deprived during the war of their normal sources of supply, established competing industries; and after the war these infant industries were fostered by protective tariffs. The financial and economic breakdown which followed the war meant that we lost our markets in the defeated countries, and also in those countries who had been accustomed to pay for our exports with the receipts from their exports to the defeated countries. Modern war, too, implies the destruction of large sums of capital—the accumulated savings of the community—which are therefore no longer available for constructive industrial development. Finally, the fact that for four years the defence industries were fostered at the expense of others makes readjustment difficult even in normal times.

There are many causes of unemployment which are not legacies of the war. It is often suggested that over-population is a major cause, and it is certainly true that the number of workers seeking employment has increased during the last twenty years. This is due to an increase in the number of women seeking employment,

to a smaller proportion of children to the total population, and to a considerable reduction in emigration. If post-war emigration had reverted to its pre-war rate, over 100,000 more people would have emigrated each year; and during the last twenty years this would have had a considerable effect upon our unemployment figures. On the other hand we have seen (Chapter III) that a declining population will not necessarily mean less unemployment; there is a greater density of population per square mile in Holland and Belgium; and in any case over-population is purely relative to the standard of living in the country.

This brings us to the question of wages; and there are many who would agree that our industry is suffering from foreign competition because our costs of production are too high. Employers blame high wages for high costs of production, and there has been a distinct post-war tendency for real wages to rise. Remuneration per hour relative to efficiency is higher to-day than before the war, and is certainly higher in England than in many other countries. Trade Unions have resolutely opposed any attempt to scale wages down; and the danger is that our diminishing national income makes a rise in standards extremely hazardous. Workers, on the other hand, maintain that high costs of production are due to inefficient administration; but even when employers do attempt to rationalise their industries, costs are only occasionally reduced, and unemployment frequently increases.

Yet another cause is heavy taxation. Direct taxation—mainly income tax—is levied on profits, and so will not further depress a declining industry. But the general effect of heavy taxes is to diminish the amount to be re-invested in industry and to check enterprise. As it is, a considerable proportion of the recent increases in income tax has gone to subsidise an unemployment insurance scheme which was made more onerous by those very increases. Indirect taxation—rates—fell very heavily upon

certain industries until the Derating Act of 1929, for rates has to be paid as assessed even if the industry was not working at a profit. Finally we must notice the effects of probable population trends (see Chapter III). A decline in the younger age group will mean fewer new entrants to industry; while this may alleviate unemployment, it is just as probable that employers will use machinery as a partial substitute for this juvenile labour. The larger proportion of older, less active and less adaptable workers which Dr. Charles forecasts, will, on the other hand, almost certainly increase unemployment.

In tackling the unemployment question since the war the state has devised three main lines of approach—unemployment insurance, public works, and industrial transference. Unemployment insurance was first introduced by the Act of 1911 and was compulsorily extended to the majority of the manual workers by the Act of 1920. These measures were, however, largely experimental and originally intended to be temporary. They were based on the assumption that the benefits which were offered could be supplemented by savings or other sources of income, and that they would be needed only to tide over short periods of unemployment. Benefits were only payable for a limited period, originally based upon the number of contributions paid; this eventually had to be dropped, as it would have meant the transference of a large number of unemployed to the Poor Law Authorities. In 1921 the period of benefit was extended from 15 to 21 weeks, and the first tentative application of a means test was made. Thus a scheme originally intended to be temporary, and admittedly barely sufficient, was applied to chronic unemployment in the depressed areas. For a time the fall in the cost of living and the introduction of dependants' allowances served to mitigate the hardships of the system; but as many of the unemployed had to seek supplementary poor relief, the government came into conflict with Boards

of Guardians—notably Poplar—and was forced to realise that benefits must be for long periods and that there was little probability of their being supplemented.

In May 1931 The May Committee on National Expenditure prepared the way for retrenchment by calling for drastic reductions in benefits, increased contributions and the application of a means test to all who were on “extended” or “transitional” benefit. Since then a number of royal commissions have reported upon the question, and an Act of 1934 divided the unemployed into three categories, eligible respectively for unemployment insurance, unemployment assistance and public assistance. The first was to be administered by the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee, and was to be confined to a strictly actuarial basis; the second by the Unemployment Assistance Board, and the third by Public Assistance Committees of local authorities. Complicated scales of benefit were laid down for unemployment assistance and these were slightly revised in 1936. The Unemployment Assistance Board regarded these scales as estimates of family needs in the absence of other sources of income. All the income coming into a household was to be treated as a single pool, irrespective of who earned it; under the 1934 regulations two thirds or more of the incomes of all members of the family was set off against the needs of the household, so as to reduce the sums allowed; these conditions were slightly improved in 1936. This obviously tends to break up the family, for more will be received by the unemployed applicant if his employed sons and daughters leave home. If unemployment is regarded as a fault of the economic system, then maintenance is the right of everyone who is prepared to work: and there can be no argument for reducing a man’s allowance. To attempt to make the relatives of the unemployed bear the cost of maintenance is to ignore the duty of the state, and to regard unemployment as the fault of the unemployed.

Public works, or relief works for the unemployed, are no new thing. They have been constantly urged by the Labour Party, and were introduced in Lancashire in the 1860's as a result of the cotton famine. But a distinction must be drawn between public works, where skilled labour applicable to the job is to be employed at the standard rate of wages, and relief works, which take on the unemployed regardless of their skill. The object of public works is to increase the demand for labour; that of relief works to absorb as many of the unemployed as possible. The government has found that relief works are cheaper, because there is no necessity to pay standard wages: but the dole was to be preferred to either, since no capital expenditure was involved. Government policy has fluctuated with changes of government, the Labour government making half hearted attempts to introduce public works and the successive Conservative or National governments resolutely cutting them down. The state has done more for industrial transference, which is based on the idea that the demand for labour will expand more rapidly in one area than another. While this is true, it is doubtful whether the total volume of unemployment has been reduced, since one man may displace another in a more prosperous area, so that the result will be merely a redistribution between areas. Moreover much of the labour to which the unemployed were transferred was only temporary—such as roadmaking—and so the labour drifted back to the old areas. Finally it is very difficult to transfer the older workers, so that the depressed areas are drained of the body of younger workers, and the burden of old and incapable people falls the heavier on those who remain.

It seems that the present economic system, based as it is upon production for profit rather than for use, desires scarcity and unemployment. In Germany unemployment is practically non-existent because there is a planned economy, working under controlled profits and prices,

although it is planned for irrational ends. It is perhaps too much to hope for so radical a change in our economic system: but there are a number of measures which might remedy an evil which is rapidly becoming more serious. If a national scheme of public works were substituted for the Dole, much might be achieved; and it has even been suggested that a temporary dole might be paid to employers, based upon the amount of extra labour that they employ. Restriction of credit might be overcome by adjusting the Bank rate to control credit; or, more feasibly, by the provision of cheap capital for credit institutions and industry. The burden of taxation might be reduced by larger depreciation allowances, by suspending the sinking fund in times of depression, and even by a general policy of tax reduction. The resulting stimulus to industry—and so to general revenue—might well balance the initial loss of revenue. In fact since the only salvation for British industry appears to lie in the establishment of new high class manufactures which the world will buy, some such reduction of the burden of taxation is inevitable; for no industry will flourish under heavy taxes and restricted credit. The problem is essentially one of underconsumption; and remedial measures must be designed to increase the consuming power of the people.

CHAPTER VI

NATIONAL REVENUE AND NATIONAL EXPENDITURE

THE raising of an adequate national revenue has always been one of the main concerns of government. A reluctance to contribute has become almost a human characteristic, whether it arose from a fear that taxation meant exaction, or from the absence of any direct satisfaction from the tax paid. In the constitutional struggle of seventeenth century England, and in the events of the Revolution of 1789 in France, control of the taxing power was a vital issue. Historically, taxation has always fallen heaviest upon the people. In most countries of western Europe in the eighteenth century the nobility and the clergy were exempt; whilst in England the predominance of the landowning class tended to shift the emphasis of taxation from land to food; and more and more revenue was raised through customs. Thus income tax could only be introduced in the country as an emergency measure dictated by the war against Napoleon; and it had to be repealed in 1816. It was reintroduced by Peel during the intensive economic distress of the early forties, and has since remained one of our main sources of revenue.

Theoretically, the principles of sound taxation are obvious; contribution should be according to ability to pay, and the tax should be easy both to assess and to collect. But to put these ideas into practice involves a number of difficulties. Since the paying of a tax implies the sacrifice of some economic satisfaction, we must be careful not to deprive the small taxpayer of necessities. The existing income tax goes some way towards assuring this, by

exempting the lowest incomes and by making the tax progressive—that is, it becomes more than proportionately heavier as the income increases. Yet in spite of surtax large fortunes are still accumulated; even with tax deductions the incomes of the wealthy are still enormous, and it is arguable that the middle class earner with £500 a year sacrifices considerably more than the man earning £10,000 a year. The difficulty is that no government dare make the tax so progressive, so steep in its incidence, as to discourage saving and investment, for then there would be an immediate outcry from industry. Moreover, when, as in this country, a considerable part of the revenue is raised from customs and excise duties, which fall more heavily upon the poorer classes, no amount of progression in a tax is likely to balance the inequalities created.

Equally difficult questions arise over the taxation of earned and unearned incomes. To tax unearned income at a higher rate is obviously the easier method, since it has less effect on industry. But since industry depends largely upon the capital accumulated by the community, care must be taken not to make the tax so progressive as to destroy the will to accumulate capital and to save. A certain degree of saving by the community is essential, and it is recognised by the rebates given for insurance policies. On the other hand, if savings are further exempted, there is no guarantee that they will not eventually be used as current income. There are certain types of unearned income which might however be more heavily taxed. The inheritance of capital sums, particularly when they go to an indirect heir, might bear a larger share of taxation than they do; whilst there is a strong case for very heavy taxation on unearned increments of property, whose owners have contributed little or nothing to their development. Various suggestions for the imposition of a single tax have been put forward; but whilst such a tax on income or food or land, or even a poll tax, might be easy to collect, a number

of anomalies would arise, and many large incomes would probably escape taxation. A multiplicity of taxes is obviously fairer, but more difficult and expensive to collect. The least disadvantageous course seems to be to make the range of taxes fairly wide, but to concentrate for the bulk of the revenue upon a few main taxes, which are as progressive as possible.

It is often urged that among the indirect objects of taxation is the redistribution of wealth; that what is taken from the rich man in the form of income tax and surtax is transferred to the poorer classes in the form of social services. In order that this contention may be examined, some consideration must be given to the details of national expenditure, and the following extract of the estimates of revenue and expenditure for 1939-40 will serve to illustrate the argument.

REVENUE

	£
Income Tax, Surtax, Estate Duties, etc.	524,250,000
Customs	232,560,000
Excise	116,460,000
Motor Vehicle Duties	43,450,000
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Total Receipts from Taxes	916,720,000
Post Office Profits, Crown Lands, Receipts from Loans, and Miscellaneous	25,880,000
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Total Ordinary Revenue	942,600,000

EXPENDITURE

	£
National Debt and Fund Services	247,200,000
Defence, including Civil Defence	247,738,000
Civil Votes, Customs and Excise, Inland Revenue	447,506,000
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Total Ordinary Expenditure	942,444,000

From this table it will be seen that the National Debt and Fund services account for over a quarter of the revenue; and defence for more than another quarter, excluding the special defence loan of £380,000,000 which is to be raised this year. The remaining item of £447,506,000 is divided between the costs of government and the social services; and it is unlikely that the cost of social services will be much over £300,000,000. Thus over half our expenditure goes on preparation for war, insurance against war, and payment for past wars. The national debt payments represent largely a transfer of wealth from the poorer classes to the richer; they tend to create a rentier class, the burden of which on the community is all the more heavy because the debts were raised at the high rate of interest prevailing in war time, and since then the pound has increased in purchasing power. Payments for defence services or for the cost of government are clearly not redistributive; so that we are left with the social services, representing about a third of our national expenditure, as being the only element likely to be so.

Here again some examination of the services provided will be useful. Approximately one third of the amount paid out in insurance (either for health or unemployment), public assistance and old age pensions is provided by contributions of employers and workers. The workers' share of the contributions, roughly half, obviously comes from their wages; whilst the employers' share is probably borne by the increased price paid by the consumer. In health insurance alone rather more than three quarters of the amounts paid out were contributed by employers and employed; whilst the amount contributed by the state for poor relief, health insurance, and old age pensions has slightly decreased since 1921.¹ The increase in the number of our unemployed since 1929 has meant that large sums have been paid out in insurance benefits, although since

¹ G. D. H. and M. I. Cole. *Condition of Britain* p. 330 et seq.

1931 there has been a growing tendency to economise. It is undeniable that there is more redistributive taxation now than before the war; but a large part of it is due not to any development of social policy but to the vast increases in unemployment payments which have become necessary. There are other methods of redistribution which, whilst not adding directly to the income of the poorer classes, provide free or subsidised services such as housing and education. Yet the expenditure by the state and local authorities on housing, slum clearance, and town planning is considerably under £18,000,000 a year; the tenants of the subsidised houses are rarely the poorest classes, but the skilled workers with a slightly higher income level.

The redistribution effected by subsidies for housing is therefore severely limited in amount, and restricted largely to a class whose need is by no means the greatest. Public expenditure on education has increased enormously since 1913, from under sixteen to well over a hundred million pounds a year. But we shall see¹ that compulsory education is often a drain upon the financial resources of a poor family when it is not supported by maintenance grants; whilst the increase in expenditure has been proportionately much greater for secondary than for elementary education. Nor can we ignore the fact that the social services are not confined to the poor, but that the wealthier classes also share in the benefits provided.

The argument that taxation results in a redistribution of income must therefore admit of severe qualification. Nor does the future appear very hopeful. It has already been hinted that increased expenditure on armaments will be followed by reductions in the social services; and since we abandoned Free Trade in 1931 the general tariff which was then imposed has been regressive in its incidence. A reference to the financial estimates for 1939-40 will show that the government hope to derive more than

¹ See Chapter XXV.

a third of their revenue from Customs and Excise. Since our principal imports are primary and food products, this noticeable increase in customs revenue cannot but mean that the poor are paying more for their food. Expenditure, in the present state of insecurity, is likely to increase; but whilst various economies are foreshadowed, and the nation's manhood has been conscripted, conscription of wealth by a capital levy remains a political promise.

CHAPTER VII

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

TRADE between the nations of the world is as old as civilisation itself; and in history the establishment of improved and increased communications has, until recently, always resulted in a continued growth in the volume of international trade. Granted the mobility of goods which better communication provides, there appears to be every reason why nations should trade with each other. Differences in national endowment, differences of climate, vegetation, and mineral deposits, mean that one country, or group of countries, may be better adapted to produce a certain commodity than are other countries. Such a country will in turn rely for commodities and materials which it cannot easily produce itself upon imports from countries with a high effective standard of production in those commodities or materials. To-day it may be argued by the apostles of national self-sufficiency that with the aid of science we can produce many goods which formerly we had to import. Here the vital factors of cost—especially labour costs—and quality enter into the argument; for artificial production of, for instance, such raw materials as rubber and petroleum is only economically justifiable when both the quality and the price of the home produced product compare favourably with those of the imported product. There are, however, political considerations bearing upon this question which, as we shall see, may vitally affect our attitude. International trade, in short, is a method of obtaining the things we need for the lowest expenditure of effort. Thus, during the nineteenth

century, differences in inventiveness and industrial development allowed England to obtain practically a monopolistic control of manufactured goods. The English industrial system was so organised that it could produce manufactured goods extensively and cheaply for the world market; and it was to our advantage to pay for an increasing quantity of imported foodstuffs by the export of just those commodities which we were the most efficient in producing, and for which there was a considerable demand abroad. For it is essential that the exports of a country which, like England, thrives largely on export trade, should have a high exchange value. Thus had we cared to develop agriculture and dairy farming during the nineteenth century we might conceivably have produced food at a price lower than that at which we could import it; but for the same expenditure of labour and capital in the industrial field we found that we could obtain a greater return. The gain to be derived from foreign trade is thus the difference between the cost of the imported commodity and the cost of the same commodity produced at home. A country may produce part of the supply of a given commodity at home, and import the rest; especially is this so in the case of extractive industries, such as agriculture, which are subject to conditions of diminishing returns.

During this century there has been a decline in the amount of international trade, and a tendency towards national self-sufficiency. The reasons for this are many. There is first the desire to achieve some sort of balance in the economic life of the nation, to produce both raw materials and manufactures. It is realised that a country dependent upon the export of one particular commodity or set of commodities is rendering itself extremely sensitive to fluctuations in world demand. Mainly agricultural countries tend to use some of their surplus foodstuffs, which they had previously exported, to provide for the home

manufactures which they are establishing. Industrial countries try to widen the range of their manufactures; and in both cases internal trade gains at the expense of international. Agricultural countries, too, are beginning to realise that manufactures have a high exchange value in international trade. The general increase in the yield of agricultural land has meant that the world demand is probably less than the world's productive capacity; and so countries exporting agricultural produce have had to export cheaply, whilst paying high prices for their imports. It is a noticeable fact that the wealthy creditor countries of the world are nearly always highly industrialised. Yet another factor is the drive for economic self-sufficiency, based as it is partly upon considerations of national honour and prestige, and partly upon more utilitarian considerations. The industrial classes in all countries have always had a strong political influence, which they exert on the government to establish and protect native industries; and the Government itself finds an easy source of revenue in customs duties on imports. Finally there is to-day the overwhelming fear that imported supplies may be interrupted in time of war; and the first line of national defence has therefore become economic independence. It is this factor, combined with the growth of population and the resulting pressure upon industry and agriculture, which is responsible for the expansionist policies of so many of the non-colonial powers to-day.

It is obvious that foreign trade is much more vital to a small, highly industrialised country than to a country where there is a considerable diversification of industry and agriculture, and where the ideal of self-sufficiency is almost realised. Since imports must be paid for by exports, it is essential that a country, like England, which has thrived on a growing export trade and has been increasingly dependent upon imported foodstuffs, should maintain her

exports. Some examination of the balance of trade is therefore indicated. For many years now we have imported more physical goods than we have exported, and yet we have maintained a favourable balance of trade. This is explained by the existence of certain claims to wealth abroad, which are generally known as invisible exports. The intense industrial activity of this country in the nineteenth century resulted in the accumulation of capital, a considerable amount of which was lent abroad. The opening up of the unoccupied territories of the world gave wide scope for foreign investment at tempting rates of interest; and it has been estimated that the total of our foreign investment in 1914 was £4,000,000,000, over half of which was invested in the Empire. The interest on this sum (something over £200,000,000 a year) is the main item in the list of our invisible exports; and it may itself be used for reinvestment abroad. Second in importance comes the payment we receive from other countries for our shipping services, and third the receipts from various financial and insurance services which we have rendered. Save in an exceptionally bad year, the total of our invisible exports more than suffices to balance the deficiency of our exports of merchandise.

Such was the position until a few years ago. But quite recently our net credit balance has declined, due partly to a decline in income from foreign investments, partly to a repayment of loans by foreign borrowers, and partly to a decline in our export of merchandise. The seriousness of the position can hardly be denied; for in the last few years we have probably been disinvesting. Our standard of living in the nineteenth century, and our growing population, were both built up under the stimulus of foreign loans; we have grown accustomed to rely upon a large amount of imported foodstuffs, and to meeting our deficiencies by a steadily increasing income from such loans. If both our visible and invisible exports decline,

then we shall have to import less; we shall have to establish new industries and to regenerate old ones, such as agriculture. The newly established industries will need protection from foreign dumping by high tariffs, and the immediate result will be to raise internal prices and ultimately lower our standard of living. A decreasing population, which seems probable, will relieve some of the pressure upon industry and agriculture; but insofar as it will also decrease the amount of our visible exports, and so the capital available for foreign investment, it will not provide adequate compensation.

At a time when the whole world is moving rapidly towards an irreducible minimum of foreign trade, it seems futile to discuss the old arguments for Protection or Free Trade. Yet certain observations may be considered relevant. We have seen the motives which influenced the younger and agricultural countries of the world in building up their own industries. But such industries, in their early stages at least, can only be established and maintained with the aid of protective duties or tariffs. The effects of a protective duty upon the internal economy of the country are often overlooked by those who urge national self-sufficiency as the ideal policy. It raises internal prices, and tends to turn industry into less advantageous channels; it makes control of internal markets and the imposition of monopoly prices far easier than under a system of open competition. Admittedly it creates a home market, but that is only a substitute for a foreign market which previously existed; and the real question is which market has the larger demand. Whilst it creates a demand for more labour in the protected industry, there will be a considerably smaller demand for labour in the declining export trades. In England, relying as she does so largely upon the importation of primary products and upon the export of manufactured goods, these evils would be intensified. The argument

used against Joseph Chamberlain's Tariff Reform still holds good; that to tax our imports means to tax our food.

There are, on the other hand, a certain number of arguments for Protection. Its validity for the protection of young industries has been generally admitted, provided that the duties imposed are moderate and temporary, and that the industries protected are those in which the country can easily reach a high degree of effective productivity. It has been suggested that a decline in imports will lead to a flow of gold into the country, which will tend to raise the level of money incomes. The country will then be at an advantage in international trade in those articles which are still imported. This would be the case only so long as the value of our exports, both visible and invisible, remained at a relatively high level; but the effect, first of a diversion of capital and labour from export industries to, say, agriculture, and secondly, of the reaction of other countries who found their exports to us heavily taxed, must not be ignored. In certain industries political considerations are advanced. A subsidy for shipping, for instance, has some justification in that it fosters a mercantile marine which may be useful in times of war. This brings us to the primary motive which is undoubtedly behind the policy of economic nationalism to-day. The policy of each country producing those specialised commodities which it is most fitted to produce is only remunerative when those commodities have high exchange values, and is only practical so long as peace is assured. Yet the idea of national self-sufficiency must itself breed insecurity. For there is no guarantee, once the economic life of a country has been balanced, once some measure of diversification of industry has been effected, that the saturation of the home market will not drive producers to look for markets elsewhere. They will engage in intense competition in each other's markets, and by subsidy and

exchange dumping seek to capture the market. With nationalist sentiment supporting economic rivalry, universal free trade is out of the question; but the alternative of economic nationalism is itself one of the most fruitful causes of war.

CHAPTER VIII

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING

SINCE the war over three million houses have been built, and particularly since 1932 there has been a boom in the building trade. Official policy has been to encourage private enterprise, and some two thirds of these new houses have been the work of commercial builders or housing companies; about a quarter of these have been subsidised by the State. The remaining million have been built by local authorities, usually with Government aid. Since 1920 there have been a number of schemes designed to deal with the housing problem. The shortage and the high cost of houses immediately after the war led to the expensive Addison scheme, in which the state bore the main burden of costs, asking only a fixed contribution from local authorities. This was replaced in 1923 by the Chamberlain scheme which provided fixed subsidies for both local authorities and private builders. Houses under this scheme were highly priced and built to be sold, not let. Consequently the Labour Government of 1924 introduced the Wheatley scheme, which offered local authorities higher subsidies if they would build cheaper houses to let to the working classes. Both the Chamberlain and the Wheatley scheme existed side by side until 1932, and the Wheatley scheme continued until the Act of 1935 provided modified subsidies for housing and slum clearance, and related both to over-crowding, which led to the "over-crowding census" of 1936.

Rent control was rendered necessary by the cessation of new building during the war, and the high cost of building

after it; and immediately after the war the maximum permitted level of rents was 50% above the pre-war level. The Chamberlain Rent Act of 1923, by reducing the maximum and by providing for decontrol on change of tenancy, tended to restrict both rent control and the mobility of labour. This proved so serious that the Rent Restriction Act of 1933 limited the decontrol of smaller houses, although it provided for the decontrol of houses rates above £35 a year on application of the landlord. Partial decontrol naturally encouraged private enterprise in building, which was also favoured by a general fall in interest rates (which permitted a lower rent) and by the growth of building societies. Yet in spite of all this building activity, there has been very little provision of houses at rents within reach of the working man's pocket. There is always the danger that the removal of slum dwellers to new houses, even if the rent is only slightly higher, will entail such extra demands upon the family's finances as seriously to affect their standards of nutrition.¹ Admittedly the vacation of small houses by tenants who move up in the social scale may provide some accommodation for the lowest income grades; but the process is an extremely slow one.

Nor can the urgency of the situation be denied. Smaller families, the influx of population into industrial centres, the intrusion of industry into housing areas, and high rates, all contribute to the predominant evil of overcrowding. The "Report on Overcrowding in England and Wales", published in 1936, estimated that 3·8 per cent of the nine million dwellings inspected were overcrowded.² If however we include houses where living rooms are also used as sleeping rooms, the figure becomes 9·4 per cent; whilst

¹ See McGonigle and Kirby. *Poverty and Public Health*.

² The standard adopted was: 2 persons to a single room; 3 to 2 rooms; 5 to 3 rooms; 7½ to 4 rooms; 10 to 5 rooms, and thereafter 2 to each room. Children under 10 counted as half; rooms differentiated by size, and only living and sleeping rooms included.

on the north east coast and in East London the percentage on the original standard is nearer fifteen than ten. Superficially, the solution is obvious. The provision of another 200,000 houses would eliminate overcrowding on the original standard of the census: an additional 300,000 would eliminate overcrowding altogether. But these houses have not only to be built; they have to be built at a cost which will enable the builder to let them at a low rent, and they have to be in a neighbourhood where the tenant will not have to shoulder the burden of an increased cost of living and additional travelling expenses. The solution lies not in haphazard rebuilding, but in careful planning for the housing of the people, in the provision of houses at very low rents,¹ in the introduction of some scheme of rent rebates such as has been tried out at Leeds, or finally in the provision of adequate incomes.

The problem of houses unfit for habitation is, if anything, more serious than that of overcrowding. Nearly three million new houses are needed, and the present slum clearance scheme has not yet dealt adequately with the problem. The number of unemployed in the building trade even at the height of its prosperity indicates that expansion is possible there; but a guarantee that the Government will pursue a consistent housing policy over a period of years is the first essential. It has been the vacillation in Government policy during the last twenty years which has done so much to undermine the confidence of those who control the building industry.

The measures which we have so far discussed have been measures to remedy existing evils. The whole question of housing the people is however closely connected with that of town and country planning; and an approach to the problem should be along positive rather than negative

¹ The National Housing and Town Planning Council, estimated that the average skilled workman could afford 11s. a week, but the unskilled labourer with dependants only 7s. a week.

lines. The eighteenth century, which gave us Bath, Brighton, and Cheltenham, was the Golden Age of town planning; but in the frantic industrialisation of the Victorian era planning was ignored. A reaction against the resulting towns of smoke and filth set in, and the nineties saw the growth of model streets which stereotyped our urban development into the drabness which we know so well. It is only in this century that any attempt has been made to plan the future development of our towns on comprehensive lines.

The problems of adequate housing, the suitable siting of industry, transport, and the preservation of the countryside, are but four interrelated aspects of the same question. Not only in London, but throughout industrial England, industry has projected itself into housing areas, and this has added to the population requiring dwellings, whilst at the same time it has decreased the number of sites available for houses. The workers have had to move further from their place of work, with all the attendant disadvantages of high living costs, extra travelling expenses, and overcrowding in trams and trains. Changes in industrial location have had considerable effects upon the density of population in certain areas; ribbon development has led to traffic congestion, a wasteful extension of such public services as gas and water, and an ugliness beyond imagination. Yet such development has been allowed to proceed almost unchecked, and it is only recently that the need for proper zoning of industrial areas has been realised.

Existing planning, with a few exceptions, has been so localised as to be largely ineffective. Isolated blocks of flats and public buildings have been erected without any attempt being made to consider the interrelated questions of road and traffic facilities. Since the building of Kingsway and Aldwych nearly thirty years ago there have been no new thoroughfares built in central London; and yet the

density of population has increased considerably. The number of casualties on the road is reaching alarming proportions; and only slowly are we beginning to realise that we must separate traffic streams of varying speed categories and of opposite directions. Even when we build an arterial road we make little effort to control building along the main road frontage, and still less building behind that frontage. We have allowed railways and other transport facilities to extend rapidly into the surrounding country without taking any steps to ensure effective planning of those areas.

The early town planning acts were mainly permissive, and restricted to suburban or unbuilt on land. The Act of 1932 extended planning to all land and took a much wider view of its purpose. It was designed not only to control building development, but to secure proper sanitary conditions, amenities and convenience, to preserve historic buildings and places of natural beauty. It provided that land might be zoned for building, or temporarily (and permanently, subject to compensation) reserved from such development. It allowed for time zoning by areas, in order that development might work outwards from the centre uniformly, and not spread itself in the haphazard fashion of the past. Already the idea of a "Green Belt" around London had been favourably received, and had done much to limit development to a definite area, and to keep town and country separate; whilst suggestions have been made for satellite towns around London which will be independent communities, on the lines of Letchworth and Welwyn. The examples of Bourneville and Port Sunlight have encouraged Manchester to build the Wythenshawe Garden Town. All efforts at town planning are however futile unless they fulfil two conditions. It is fatal to regard the question as purely a local one, or to dissociate it from the connected problems of transport and housing, A central authority for national and regional planning.

with executive powers, is the first essential. It is, finally, just as vital that in all planning schemes major consideration should be given to the provision of houses and amenities which will be within reach of the workers' modest income.

CHAPTER IX

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE, always an important factor in our economic system, is to-day assuming a new and wider significance. In the first place, the researches of experts on nutrition have shown us how vital the nation's food is to the nation's health; and many would urge that we should concentrate on developing our agricultural resources in order to provide those foodstuffs which are most nutritive at the lowest possible prices. More recently the threat of war has forced us to consider planning our agriculture for defence, in order to provide as large a store of foodstuffs at home as possible in case our foreign supplies are checked. Above all this, since the war there has been the constant complaint of the farmers of high costs, uncertain prices, and heavy taxation. There are thus three aspects to be considered in any discussion of agriculture; the interests of agriculture considered purely as an industry, the interests of national health, and the interests of national economy.

It is a common cry to-day that agriculture is declining, and whilst this is probably an overstatement, some examination of our changing agriculture is called for. Agriculture has indeed certainly changed during the last twenty-five years. Most noticeable has been the decrease in the total area under cultivation from thirty-seven million to twenty-eight million acres, a decrease due largely to urban encroachment. There has also been a shift in the emphasis of agriculture, from arable land to pasture for raising livestock. Mechanisation applied to farming has considerably increased the output of one man, so that the

industry is to-day producing more than it did a decade ago. To the popular mind the most obvious symptom of these changes is contained in the drift from the land. It has been estimated that between 1925 and 1938 the number of workers regularly employed on the land fell by twenty per cent, to say nothing of the thousands who obtain casual agricultural employment. This drift, although partly due to the change over to pasture land, and the use of mechanised units, both of which require less man power, is also the result of a number of disadvantages under which the farm labourer suffers. Wages are low, varying from 30s. to 40s. a week throughout the country; hours are long, living accommodation often inadequate. The farm worker is often an isolated worker, and facilities for his leisure are meagre. He has few of the amenities which the average factory worker regards as his right, and it is not surprising that the town has drawn more and more men from the land. Naturally it has attracted the younger men, with the result that farming is becoming largely the business of old men.

Yet the diagnosis of the evils which beset farming to-day is not so simple as it might appear. Any series of reforms must take account of a number of factors which are peculiar to agriculture, and which go some way towards explaining its present position. The farmer is predominantly an isolated individual, working on his own and preferring his own methods; and whilst the work of agricultural colleges, research institutes, and county agricultural organisers, has familiarised many farmers with modern methods of production, the agricultural population of this country has always been a conservative one; so that progress will probably be slow. Farming, too, is largely dependent upon assistance from outside capital for the buildings, drainage, fencing and the like which are the essential preliminaries of efficient production to-day. More than any other industry, farming is dependent upon

the vagaries of the weather; for this reason, and because of the general uncertainty of prices, farmers cannot work to order on a schedule of prices, as can other industries. Production cannot be retarded, or stopped to meet decreasing demand, and the change over from one type of production to another involves considerable expense and a lengthy time lag. Perhaps the most urgent need is for capital, for it is another of the characteristics of farming that the return upon capital invested is both uncertain and slow. Large landowners, who in the past had that capital, have been forced by death duties and high taxes to agree to the break up of their large estates. Many of the small owner occupiers, who have rapidly increased since the war, find that they bought their farms at the high prices then prevailing, and have had to face a period of falling prices. There is a pressing demand for renovation of buildings, rebuilding of cottages, adequate drainage and fertilising; and although the Land Fertility Scheme of 1937¹ has helped some farmers, there are many who cannot even afford to take advantage of that.

In the marketing of his products the farmer is even more at a disadvantage. A good crop may often mean poverty to the producer, for a small increase in supply in a local market may often mean a big drop in prices. In many markets a closely organised system of producers' rings serves to fix a price above which they will not buy; and here any attempt to help the farmer by subsidy, as in the beef subsidy of 5s. a hundredweight, will frequently be defeated by the ring of dealers forcing a fall in prices. Moreover, between producer and consumer a considerable inflation of price takes place; the retail price of milk, for instance, is double the price the producer gets. Its high price decreases effective demand, so that almost a third of home produced milk is sold for manufacturing processes

¹ Under which the farmer paid three quarters the cost of the basic slag, and one half the cost of the lime.

at 5½d. a gallon.¹ Seasonally high prices for certain commodities, such as eggs, have serious effects upon the consuming habits of the public and so upon the prices obtained by producers. Thus one of the most obvious reforms must be in the creation of some organisation to relate production, marketing and the sale of food, and so to reduce the wide margin between producer's costs and retail prices. The vested interests of the distributing agencies will probably prove so strong, however, that nothing short of compulsory nationalisation, possibly introduced under stress of war, is likely to bring this about.

Various suggestions have been made, and some of them acted upon, in order to improve the position of the farmer. Protective tariffs, although favoured by the farmers, are open to serious objections. They cannot be applied in an extreme form, because of our growing dependence upon imported supplies; they are entirely for the benefit of the producers, and give no guarantee that more efficient production or greater consideration for consumers' interest, will necessarily follow. In practice their effect is often neutralised by export bounties granted in the exporting country, as in the case of fat cattle from Ireland; whilst in so far as they represent a tax upon essential food supplies they can only cause a general rise in retail prices. More can be said for the marketing schemes introduced during the last few years. By a process of rationalisation, of restricting supplies in relation to demand, they tend to reduce the margin between producer and consumer. But they have a tendency to consider primarily the interests of the producer, to interfere with the farmer's liberty of action, and to dictate prices to consumers. Direct subsidy may have some justification in encouraging a nascent industry; but since the subsidy represents a contribution from all consumers, there should be reasonable assurance

¹ Addison. *A Policy for British Agriculture*, Gollancz, 1938, p. 72.

that eventually the subsidised industry will prove self-supporting. In the case of the existing subsidy for beet sugar, no such assurance exists in face of the competition of sugar cane. Moreover, care must be taken that the subsidy is not absorbed by others in the distributive system, as in the case of the beef subsidy. Another form of state aid, is that of quota regulation, under which a given quantity of produce for importation is allocated to the importing country. Here, particularly when we are to any degree dependent upon the imports of that country, the danger is that the monopolistic control of importing agencies will tend to raise the price of the imported products. A form of levy subsidy is at present in operation for wheat. Under the Wheat Act of 1932 a standard price of 10s. a cwt. or 45s. a quarter is fixed at a production quota of thirty-six million hundredweights. Provided the quota is not exceeded the farmer receives sufficient to cover the gap between the market price and the standard price; but if the quota is exceeded assistance is decreased proportionately. Funds for financing this scheme are raised by a levy on wheat flour, home grown or imported, which is incorporated in the price of wheat and bread, and so paid by the consumer. This scheme not only favours the wheat farmer at the expense of other farmers, but represents a form of indirect taxation upon essential food which is most unfair in its incidence. If subsidy is needed, then it should be paid direct from the exchequer.

The wheat scheme has become important because recently farmers have demanded a form of price insurance based upon the Wheat Quota. The Conservative Agricultural Commission ask for standard prices to cover cost and reasonable profit. Leaving aside the difficult question of what constitutes reasonable profit, it must be pointed out that to base prices upon cost of production is to base them upon a factor which in agriculture varies considerably according to efficiency of production. What is necessary is to assess

the extent of the demand for any particular product, and so fix a quota of production. The price can then be fixed at such a figure as to ensure that that quota will be absorbed. There may be much to be said for the policy of guaranteed prices, but it must be remembered that such a policy by itself, without any further rationalisation of the industry, is merely to favour the producer at the expense of the consumer. A recent estimate has shown that the policy is likely to be extremely expensive,¹ and it is possible that similar results may be obtained by a less expensive reform of the distributive system.

It would thus seem that the future of agriculture should be in the control of production and distribution. The capital necessary for increased efficiency in production can only come from the state; agricultural output is so dependent upon a number of variable factors that only a national scheme of storage can hope to stabilise prices; whilst the distributive agencies are so strongly entrenched that rationalisation could only be effected by the state. Some form of state planning seems essential, and this is borne out by considerations of national health. From the point of view of nutrition we need to encourage the production and consumption of such essentials as dairy produce, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables. Dr. Addison has estimated that, to meet our nutritive needs, we must double our home production of milk, increase our production of eggs, fruit and vegetables by over 60 per cent, and of meat by 25 per cent. The Committee on Malnutrition, reporting in July, 1938, suggested that the vital need was for the reduction of the prices of these essentials, and urged the formation of food boards to buy, store and distribute these commodities in bulk. State agricultural expenditure should be concentrated on these items, and any alteration in agricultural policy in preparation for

¹ In *The Economist* for Jan. 28th, 1939, where the estimate was £20,000,000 a year.

war should be the smallest possible. Yet there are various difficulties to be overcome. Assuming that we could bring prices down to a figure at which the demand became really effective, we have still the problem of persuading the people to buy foods of high nutritive value, and it is not going to be easy to encourage milk drinking and fruit eating among a population whose staple diet has for long consisted of bread, margarine, tea, fish and chips. Again, those commodities whose production we would not encourage, such as grain and sugar, are just those which would most heavily burden our shipping in time of war.

We produce almost all our supplies of fluid milk, and nearly all the potatoes we consume. On the other hand we import about 80 per cent of our flour, 50 per cent of our meat, and 90 per cent of our fats, including lard, butter and oil. We are largely dependent upon imported feeding stuffs, for about one quarter of our home products depends upon the imports of foodstuffs for cattle. Whilst we may claim that our food production has increased in recent years, much of that increase is in live stock, cattle, pigs and poultry, which are dependent upon imported foodstuffs, and are wasteful machines for converting those foodstuffs into meat, milk and eggs. There is here a strong argument for a return to arable grass farming, for in the event of war we could not hope to maintain our existing livestock under present agricultural conditions. The provision of cheap credits to enable the farmer to return to an arable grass system of cultivation, and to introduce more modern methods; some form of price guarantee, preferably by a control of the marketing of produce; and a general cheapening of productive costs, would not only make us more immune from the effects of a long blockade, but would go far towards answering the grievances of the farmers to-day.

CHAPTER X

SOME PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRY

ONE of the most noticeable features of our post war industry has been the decline in our export trades. Whilst the value of our exports in 1929 was considerably higher than in 1913, their volume was almost a fifth less; to-day both value and volume are smaller, whilst the value and volume of our imports are higher than they were before the war. The main reason for this decline in exports is that we have had to face the competition of foreign manufacturers in just those industries which constituted more than half our normal export trade—coal, cotton goods, and steel—and in which we had established a monopoly in the nineteenth century. Moreover from 1925 to 1931 we were on the gold standard; and this, as we have seen, meant that our prices were higher than the rest of the world. Our imports, on the other hand, were cheaper, and so less exports were needed to pay for them. But the decline in certain of our main industries cannot be attributed solely to foreign competition. Each industry has its own problems, and it is proposed briefly to discuss these particular problems for some of our more staple industries.

1. *Coal*

In 1913 we produced about 287 million tons of coal, about 200 million tons of which were for home consumption. By 1933 this had fallen to 207 million tons, and by 1937 it had only partially recovered, the output being 241 million tons. This decline is in part due to a loss of export trade, and the area which suffered most was South

Wales, which exported considerable quantities. The increasing use of substitutes, such as oil, gas and electricity, and the economy in the use of coal made possible by increased boiler efficiency, also contributed to the decline; whilst the introduction of mechanised processes meant that the capacity of the industry was increased when the demand was falling. Yet there are a number of features peculiar to the coal industry which should be considered in any discussion of the industry. We have already seen that not all areas were affected to the same degree, and that South Wales suffered more than East and West Yorkshire in so far as it was more dependent upon export trade. Moreover, coal is not a single commodity, but consists of a great variety of products which are jointly supplied. Thus the demand for one class of coal may be highly elastic, although the general total demand, in view of the necessity of fuel, is highly inelastic. Further, fluctuations in the demand for household coal are largely seasonal, and can be catered for; but the demand for industrial coal varies with the condition of industry, and is subject to those same periods of boom and depression to which industry is subject.

As early as 1925 the Samuel Commission stressed the need for amalgamation in the coal industry, and in 1928 various voluntary amalgamation schemes were adopted in South Wales, Scotland and the Midlands. The Midlands scheme formed the basis for the Coal Act of 1930. Under Part I of this act control of output throughout the industry was regulated by a central council and district boards; and the district boards were also responsible for fixing district prices. The act was designed to limit competition, and to afford some protection to an industry which was facing a long period of decline; and it certainly served to protect the industry during the depression of the early thirties. Various criticisms, however, soon arose. It was found that the output allocated to a district did not

necessarily correspond to the demand in that district, since the output was merely a proportion of the total demand. With the decline in the export trade, the scheme operated unfairly between districts which mainly supplied the home market, and those which concentrated on exports, where the controlled output was fixed at too high a figure. This was partially remedied in 1934 by the separation of inland and export trade. There was also a generally recognised need for co-ordination of district prices, and in fact for a rationalisation of the whole industry. Part II of the 1930 Act had been intended to facilitate concentration of ownership by voluntary means; and if these failed provision was made to introduce compulsion under a Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission. Finally, the Act of 1937 made provision for the nationalisation of royalties, and for the enforced amalgamation of colliery undertakings in certain cases.

2. *Cotton*

Before the war Lancashire produced nearly 9,000 million yards of cotton goods, and exported four fifths of it. In 1938 it produced only 2,700 million yards, and exported only half of it, whilst it was estimated that the capacity of the industry was only 5,000 million yards. The cotton industry was, by its exports, the largest purchaser of the vital imports which this country needs, so that the decline of the industry is not merely an industrial but a national problem. The causes of the decline are many. The potential output of the industry, even in its present state, is too high, and there is too much redundant plant, whilst much of the machinery is hopelessly obsolete. Only 6 per cent of the Lancashire looms are automatic, but the corresponding figure for the world is 20 per cent. The various processes of the industry, spinning, weaving, dyeing, etc. are all independent, and no attempt at rationalisation has been made. Lancashire has also largely lost the lead in the production of textile machinery. Mill-

owners, constantly forced to cut their prices to meet the competition of low labour cost producers like Japan, cannot afford to buy new machinery. The industry is overloaded on the distributive side; of 2,000 merchants some 400 do four fifths of the business, and the remaining 1,600 make a living as best they can.

That the national importance of the industry is realised is shown by the bill which is at the moment¹ going through Parliament. The Cotton Industry (Reorganisation) Bill provides for the scrapping of redundant machinery, which is to be bought up by a Cotton Industry Board, and paid for by a levy on the section of the industry concerned. Minimum prices are to be fixed by the Board, based on the average cost of a sample number of efficient producers. An Export Development Committee is to encourage exports, and to permit sales below the minimum price to foster the export trade. The bill has already aroused much opposition. It is argued that the British consumer is paying higher prices for his cotton goods in order to subsidise the export of such goods. The small millowners, who must undercut to get business, and the merchants who to-day only just manage to survive, see that they will gradually be driven out of business. The heads of the big vertical combines in the industry, who are actually making good profits, argue that the bill puts a premium on inefficiency, and that, since the real evils are over capitalisation and obsolete plant, what is wanted is drastic reorganisation and the creation of a new market for high quality goods where Japan cannot compete. In any case, whatever the future of the industry, reorganisation and rationalisation can only mean reduction of output, and so an increase of unemployment. In 1913 Lancashire employed 600,000 people in the mills; the most vital question is how many of these can hope to be fully employed even in a reorganised industry.

¹ June, 1939.

3. *Shipping and Shipbuilding*

During the last ten years there has been a considerable decline both in shipping and shipbuilding, and the decline has been most marked in shipbuilding. This is largely due to the lessons learnt from the war by other countries, who then realised that an adequate merchant marine is a valuable adjunct of national defence. They thus determined to build up their own fleet even if it cost them more; but they found in fact that the prices ruling in English shipyards were higher than elsewhere. This rise in costs of construction is in part due to a rise in the cost of raw materials and wages, and has been increased by the recent rearmament programme. Compared with England foreign tramp shipping has a number of advantages. The lower capital cost of ships cannot be attributed solely to state aid and subsidies, for in Holland and the Scandinavian countries, where there are no subsidies, and where wages are not much lower, the costs are considerably lower than in England. We compare very unfavourably also not only in capital costs, but in running costs, such as wages, manning, and insurance, and in the cost of repairs.

In view of the extent of the British Empire, and of our dependence upon supplies from overseas, there is a sound strategical argument for government aid for shipping. The industry has asked for subsidies which will amount to about £8,500,000 a year, and it seems as if some state aid of this extent will be inevitable. It is vital that we should maintain a fixed relation between the proportion of the world's merchant fleet which we own, and our proportion of the world's sea borne trade; whilst the shipbuilding industry should be maintained at a level which will meet the maximum requirements of the country in time of war. Shipping and shipbuilding must be regarded largely as complementary industries, and both as part of our policy of national defence. Yet before any subsidy is given, a

thorough investigation of costs should be made, for even if more ships are a necessity there is no reason why they should be unduly expensive. Yet the easiest way to decrease costs is to encourage trade; for the decline in both shipping and shipbuilding is linked up with the decline in world trade. Rising costs are in part due to a diminution in the amount of work over which overhead expenses can be spread, for the capacity of our shipyards to build is greater than the demand. In so far as official government policy is responsible for this decline in world trade, it is all the more imperative that some subsidy should be made until the intense economic nationalism of to-day is abandoned.

4. *Transport*

Perhaps the most important problem to-day is that presented by the railways. They complain that they are unable to fight the competition of road transport because they are hampered by a number of legal restrictions, imposed during the last century when the railways had a monopoly of all forms of land transport. The most irksome of these restrictions are the complicated classification of rates, the obligation to publish them, and the obligation to give equality of treatment and avoid undue preference. Road transport contractors are under no obligation to accept whatever is offered them for carriage, and they are free to quote preferential rates to certain customers.

The Railways Act of 1921 not only amalgamated the various lines into the four great companies of to-day, but provided for the fixing of rates by the Railway Rates Tribunal at a level which would produce for the railways an annual net revenue of £50,000,000. The act did not become operative, however, until 1928, and by then the Tribunal found that it could not so adjust rates, partly because of bad trade, and partly through the competition of road transport, which had grown so rapidly in the previous few years. The railway industry has particularly

heavy overhead costs, in the maintenance of permanent way, rolling stock, stations, etc.; and the system of charging on the basis of classification depends upon the preservation of the balance between goods carried at a low rate and those carried at a high rate. This is only possible when the railways have a monopoly; but when road transport contractors offered competitive prices for those goods for which the railways charged highly, then the railways were left to transport mainly the bulky, cheap raw materials of industry at rates which were insufficient to cover the actual cost of transit. The railways at first attempted to restrict the growth of the new industry, by insisting on the imposition of limited licences, and by urging the imposition of classified rates. They have also bought up numerous shares in road transport concerns, but their control here is insufficient to prevent the road transport companies taking the cream of the traffic.

Towards the end of 1938 the railways asked for their "Square Deal"—the removal of the statutory restrictions. They were at pains to point out that such a removal would not mean necessarily an increase in rates, since they wanted more traffic rather than a general increase in rates. Two dangers were apparent in their proposals; the first, an inauguration of a period of cut throat competition between road and rail, which might provide cheap transport, but would seriously affect the capital earnings of the two concerns; the other, a chaotic system of rates, varying from time to time, from place to place, and often from customer to customer. The Transport Advisory Council, in making its report on the railways' demands in May 1939, seems to have realised these dangers. It suggests a relaxation of the statutory control of charges, to be tried out for five years. A tribunal is to decide what rate is reasonable, considering such factors as the public interest, variation in cost, and alternative facilities. Railways are to make their rates known, and there is to be no discrimination. It also strongly urges some co-ordination of transport,

which might either be along the lines of allowing traffic to move by the route which involved the smallest social cost, or by an agreement between the present competitors to stabilise the existing position. It may lead to nationalisation of transport; but one interesting suggestion is to pool the overhead charges of the whole transport industry, and to make it a first charge on all types of traffic.

5. *The Location of Industry.*

The last twenty years has seen a shift of industry from the north to the south, and the movement of population during the Industrial Revolution is being reversed. This is due to a number of causes, the most important of which is that there has been a steady change from industry to trade, and so a shift towards London, ideally situated as a trading centre. Nearness to raw materials is no longer so important for the new light industries which are growing up; accessibility to urban markets, to new sources of power, and to fresh methods of transport, are becoming the vital considerations. Many of the new industries have created a home market, and sell direct to the consumer; and they find that the consumer is most accessible from London. Employers prefer the south, for wages are higher, rates heavier, and trade unions stronger in the north. This change in the location of industry may have disturbing effects, as we saw in considering the problem of town planning; and a recent report on the question by P.E.P. suggests remedial measures. It urges the establishment of a central body, the Industrial Development Commission, which will control the establishment of new, and the extension of old, factories. There is also a strong argument for the setting up of a National Planning Commission, which will control urban and industrial development throughout the whole country, and endeavour to achieve a balance between the prosperity of the home counties and the desolation of the distressed areas.

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PART II

THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER XI

THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION

THE English Constitution, unlike that of the U.S.A. or France, is contained in no one body of law. It is unwritten, and depends for its working not upon a set of constitutional laws so much as upon rules which are in part statutory, in part based upon Common Law, and in part merely conventional. But it is more than this; it is "society in its political aspect";¹ it embraces the social character of all our institutions, such as the Church and the press. Constitutional historians have, perhaps naturally enough, concentrated on the legal aspects of our constitution; or, like Bagehot, have been so overawed by the mystery and the magic of the mechanism that they have failed to relate it to practical politics. In the following chapters an attempt will be made to examine the classical plan of the constitution in the light of our knowledge of its everyday operation; but first some effort must be made to appreciate the orthodox approach.

A comparison of the English Constitution with that of the United States affords some interesting features. The Constitution of the U.S.A., now over a hundred and fifty years old, provided for the federation of the thirteen original states of North America. Its seven original articles have been enlarged by nineteen amendments, each amendment having been ratified, according to Article 5 of the original constitution, by the legislatures of three quarters of the states composing the Union. The seven original articles, with the amendments, constitute the American

¹ H. R. G. Greaves, *British Constitution*, Allen & Unwin, p. 11.

constitution; and the constitution is supreme over any law of the Federal Congress or the state legislature which may happen to conflict with it. The English constitution is not to be found in any single document or collection of documents. There is no distinction between constitutional law and statute law, because we have never agreed, or had occasion to agree, upon what constitutes constitutional law. No statute, therefore, can be said to conflict with the constitution; and this leads naturally to the legislative supremacy of parliament, a principle of the Constitution which must be discussed later.

It is, however, possible to distinguish laws of major constitutional importance. Such statutes as Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights are obviously of this kind. Laws establishing the succession to the throne, such as the Act of Settlement, the Abdication Act and the Royal Marriage Act, since they regulate institutions, are also of major importance. So are acts which regulate the qualifications of parliamentary electors, as the Reform Acts, or which determine the relative powers of Lords and Commons, as the Parliament Act. All acts which define the powers of the Judicature, or of ministries or public boards, similarly form part of the Constitution. There are, moreover, certain rules of Common Law, such as those from which the King derives his prerogatives, or parliament its legislative supremacy. Finally there are the so-called privileges of parliament, defining the powers enjoyed by the two houses for the protection and discipline of their members.

In addition to this complex body of law, there are a number of customs or conventions of the Constitution. Whilst a breach of any one of these conventions would not constitute a direct infringement of any rule of law, yet it would ultimately bring the administration face to face with the prospect either of committing such an infringement, or of being unable to carry on the government. The conventions are of three kinds. There are those which,

if they were not observed, would entail ultimate conflict with the law. Such are those understandings which recognise the responsibility of ministers to parliament, the right of the party with the majority in the Commons to assume office, and the right of dissolution. Secondly there are those which have a political sanction, such as the agreement that governments do not introduce highly controversial legislation unless they have a mandate from the electorate; or that, if an appeal to the country has proved unfavourable, a ministry is bound to retire from office and may not dissolve parliament a second time. Thirdly there are general understandings aimed at the better working of particular institutions, such as the assurance to the opposition of adequate rights of expression.

The basic principle of the English Constitution, as we have suggested, is the legislative supremacy of parliament. In England neither King nor Cabinet can legislate by decree unless that power is conferred upon them by parliament—in which case it can be taken away by parliament. There is nothing legally that parliament cannot do, and no authority can legally challenge its competence. Closely connected with this legislative supremacy of parliament is what the late Professor Dicey called “the rule of law”.¹ No man is above the law, and in England there is no “*droit administratif*”, no separate body of law applicable only to the servants of the Crown. The constitution is itself the product of the ordinary law of the land, and even the competence of parliament derives from this law. Finally, the political supremacy of the electorate is to-day just as fundamental a principle of the Constitution as the supremacy of parliament. Here, as Mr. H. R. G. Greaves has pointed out,² there is obvious ground for conflict between parliament and the electorate, both claiming supremacy. He suggests that the Constitution only

¹ A. V. Dicey, *Law of the Constitution*.

² Greaves, *op. cit.* pp. 14-15.

functions in spite of such inherent potentialities of conflict because of the community of interest among those who operate it; and points out that when keen division and social cleavage occurs, as in recent times, conventions have been suggested designed to limit the supremacy of parliament by reference to the supremacy of the electorate. It thus appears that the constitution works only because of a general agreement among the various parties to work it; and when that common interest in its functioning disappears, its effective working is likely to be considerably impaired.

The Constitution has certain well defined characteristics. It is in the first place unitary and not federal, which makes possible the supremacy of a single institution and strengthens the authority of the central government at the expense of local government. The executive—the Cabinet—is a parliamentary executive, and the close union between executive and legislature minimises the dangers of deadlock which might ensue between a popularly elected legislature and a popularly elected executive. That such dangers are real may be seen from a consideration of the American Constitution or of the French Constitution of 1848. As we have observed the constitution is unwritten—largely because we have had no revolution of such importance as to render necessary a radical overhauling of our system of government. It is argued that this makes the constitution more flexible, and that there is therefore a facility of reform, a ready adaptability inherent in it. All that this really means is that constitutional reform is just as easy, or as difficult, as any other legislative process; and how easy or how difficult the change will be will depend upon the nature of the political machine. If reform conflicts with the views of those who control the machine, it can be a long business; but when the proposed reform is in favour of the controlling interests, then the constitution is certainly flexible enough.

The English Constitution has the supreme merit that it works; and its supreme achievement is the reconciliation of policy and justice. But, in common with many other constitutions there is no specific legal guarantee of personal rights. Freedom of expression, association, meeting and speech may be either agreed conventions of the Constitution or may be embodied in statute law. The law of sedition and blasphemy is applied only in extreme cases, and it is understood that it should only be so applied. But no fundamental statutory change would be needed to alter this understanding. Here again the flexible and unwritten nature of the Constitution is a merit only insofar as those who cause the machine to function have the same political ideology as the bulk of the people.

CHAPTER XII

THE MONARCHY

REPUBLICANISM in England has been dead for nearly seventy years. At a time when most of the European monarchies have disappeared, or have become absolute nonentities in the face of totalitarian authority, the royal family to-day is seldom criticised and often worshipped. We may attack the House of Lords, and we may attack the aristocracy; and yet royalty, which belongs to the same outworn social order, is popularly accepted. It may be argued that the monarchy is our main bulwark against fascist dictatorship; and yet Italy to-day has both. Or it may be that the people regard their King as the father of their country, as Charles II was once so regarded in a more literal sense.

The evolution of popular monarchy is a comparatively recent development. George IV and William IV, a little over a century ago, were attacked in the most open and vituperative manner, whilst the popularity of Queen Victoria was gained only late in life. Little respect indeed was paid to royalty. Punch could make a joke in questionable taste about the birth of the Prince of Wales;¹ in the feud between the Queen and Palmerston public sympathies were emphatically with the Foreign Secretary; whilst the Prince Consort was bitterly attacked both in parliament and in popular broadsheets. Even *The Times* attacked the Queen for her retirement from public life after her

¹ See Kingsley Martin, *The Evolution of Popular Monarchy*, Political Quarterly, Vol. 7, 1936, and *The Magic of Monarchy*, 1937.

husband's death. The revolutions in Spain in 1866 and France in 1870 encouraged a republican movement in England, prominent adherents of which were Charles Bradlaugh, Sir Charles Dilke, John Bright and John (later Lord) Morley; whilst even Joseph Chamberlain regarded as inevitable the establishment of a republic.¹

The movement failed, but it taught the monarchy its lesson. It was Disraeli's avowed policy to exploit the Crown, and in 1876 Victoria became Empress of India and entered the public stage once more. Her retirement had shrouded her with mystery, her prolonged grief won for her the sympathy of her people. Those people were of a generation who knew little or nothing of the Hanoverian Georges, and regarded the Queen solely as a symbol of the glories of the Victorian age. Yet she was no insignificant cipher. Her political partisanship was open and decided, and her sympathies were emphatically with the Tory party. She was completely out of touch with the progress of her age; her ideas of foreign policy were mere legacies from her late husband, and yet thirty years after his death she did not hesitate to impress them most forcibly upon her ministers. In the popular estimation, however, she remained still "the old lady"; and it was her advanced age and the achievements of her reign which stifled any breath of criticism.

Nor was her son, Edward VII, less of a partisan. He opposed the reform of the House of Lords and Women's Suffrage, and whilst his personal foreign policy may have gained him the popular title of "Peacemaker", it led him into many conflicts with his ministers. Yet under George V the monarchy again reached the heights of popularity; and some examination of the reasons for this unassailability must be made.

The most significant factor in the popularity of the

¹ Greaves, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

monarchy to-day is undoubtedly the belief that the monarch is neutral; that he stands aside from party. To what extent this belief is substantiated by experience is doubtful, but the belief was more widely held under George V than under Victoria or Edward VII, and to-day the conception of royal impartiality is clearly accepted. Another important factor in the popularisation of the monarchy is the influence of the propaganda of press, radio, and cinema. The nineteenth century was frequently critical of royalty; but to-day the actions of the royal family always provide a good news story, whether they come from the daily papers, the B.B.C., or the news reel. So the state visits and the charitable performances of royalty are fully reported in the popular press, and given an importance out of all relation to their true significance. Since those who read these news items most eagerly are women, it is obvious editorial policy not to report anything to the discredit of royalty. Thus there has grown up round the royal family an aura of perfection. Yet the very people who are responsible for inculcating this irrational attitude to the monarchy, and a considerable proportion of those who so avidly lap up news of this kind, are the most cynical in their private views, and the most ready to indulge in scandalous comment.

The King is also the symbol of imperial unity, although to-day he is not even responsible for the appointment of Dominion Governors. As the head of society he can send his son to visit the Dominions, or visit them himself, and so give the colonials a taste of the splendour and the pageantry, the mystery and the magic, which surrounds the monarchy. For it is this pageantry which has the greatest popular appeal; and, even though there has been a certain relaxation in the rigidity of court etiquette, there is still the glory of the "season", and the court still attracts the social climber. It is in this respect that the contrast with other constitutional monarchies is most

marked. In the smaller democracies of Northern Europe there is less money spent on the court, and so less pomp and circumstance; and they have achieved thereby a larger measure of social democracy.

Kingsley Martin has pointed out that the main strength of those constitutional monarchies which still survive lies in the separation between the monarch and the executive. We can at one and the same time worship the monarch and attack his ministers. Whilst the King was identified with the executive he was always subject to attack, and the new cult of monarchy can be attributed to the fact that royal interference has decreased, or, more probably, is more carefully concealed from the public mind. We demand of a King that he shall be ostensibly impartial, and that his character shall be such as to win our respect. Thus the official reason for the abdication of Edward VIII was that the government were not prepared to accept Mrs. Simpson as Queen. It is widely believed that the King's proposed marriage provided an opportunity for the cabinet to make a stand on the question of the circle of friends who surrounded the King. The importance of the abdication crisis, however, lies not so much in the merits and demerits of the King's case, as in the way in which the Press was used to create a public opinion hostile to the King. In different circumstances the marriage might have been publicised as a romantic affair, and the popularity of a monarch, who had already gained immense popularity as Prince of Wales, thereby increased. Vigorous and rather obvious efforts have since been made to popularise the monarchy in the person of George VI: but unquestionably the assumption underlying the abdication—that the monarch is removable by the government—has done serious damage to the institution of monarchy.

In discussing the powers of the monarchy we must be careful to distinguish between the formal and the real power of the King. The former are immense, and a

catalogue of them would be misleading, and give a grossly distorted view of the position of the monarchy. Most of them have, since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, been transferred to the Cabinet. His real powers are generally assumed to be small, to be, in fact, contained in Bagehot's definition of "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn". Before the Cabinet can act, it must have the King's approval; and yet there is no legal obligation upon the King to give that approval, for his actions are almost entirely governed by convention. The King has, for instance, a certain amount of freedom in the choice of a Prime Minister; for whilst it is established by convention that he should be guided by the consideration of which party has a majority in the Commons, there is always the possibility of more than one leader being available, or of a coalition being formed under the King's persuasion, as in 1931. The convention that the King should approve ministerial acts is likely to be observed because, if it were not, he would be accused of partisanship, and neutrality is one of the main strengths of constitutional monarchy. Yet an occasion might arise when he could maintain that the Government had no mandate for its particular policy, and insist upon a dissolution. Even if the election confirmed the policy of the Government the prestige of the King would hardly suffer, whilst if the electorate repudiated the Government's policy it would thereby endorse the constitutionality of the King's action. Again, in 1910 Edward VII made it clear that he would not contemplate the wholesale creation of new peers in order to pass the Parliament Act until the Government had been twice confirmed in power by two elections. Yet was it argued in the abdication crisis that the King should accept the advice of his ministers; and what applies to a royal marriage should apply with equal force to the creation of peers. The extent of the real power of the Crown is then perhaps larger than is generally imagined; and

there are certainly considerable reserves of power which might be used. Whether they would be used in any given set of circumstances will depend largely upon the character of the monarch, the extent to which the Cabinet is determined to stand upon its rights, and ultimately, perhaps, upon the political philosophy of the Government of the day.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE House of Commons is to-day composed of 615 members, of whom 528 represent English and Welsh constituencies, 74 Scottish, and the remaining 13 come from Northern Ireland. Technically, all British subjects are eligible for election to the House of Commons unless they are minors, lunatics, bankrupts, criminals still serving a sentence of more than twelve months' imprisonment, or parliamentary candidates found guilty of corrupt practices. Clergy of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church are also excluded, as are most peers.¹ The holders of certain offices under the Crown were originally debarred from entering the Commons in order to check royal influence; but since the growth of the Cabinet system deprived the Crown of much of its influence, the tendency has been to keep Government officials out of politics. Thus judges and all civil servants can only enter parliament by first resigning their posts, the only exception being ministers of the Crown and certain civil servants employed in an industrial capacity. We shall see that this principle of exclusion has been extended far beyond the government service.

In practice, however, membership of the Commons is restricted to a comparatively narrow class. The economic insecurity and the low remuneration of a political career, which offers at best only a slight prospect of promotion, has meant that the field is limited to those of the middle

¹ An Irish peer may represent an English constituency, if he does not already hold a seat in the Lords.

class with private incomes. There has, of course, always been this financial limitation; and it is only since 1911 that members have been paid a salary. When we contrast the expenses of election and of nursing a constituency with the remuneration offered in the alternative careers in the services, the Church, and the professions, it is obvious why a political career attracts only a few. How far this is likely to affect the quality of the House, insofar as only the second best will go into politics, is a question which might be considered. The principle of exclusion from political work which obtains in the government services has also been extended to industry, to local government, to teaching, and even to the universities. Whilst obviously those who are normally in the closest contact with a minister in their everyday work ought to be excluded from the Commons, this wholesale exclusion appears as an unwarrantable infringement of the rights of citizenship. A period of leave should be substituted for the compulsory resignation upon being elected; or alternatively the economic insecurity of a political career might be mitigated, and membership might be made more attractive.

The individual member of parliament is to-day comparatively insignificant, and it is one of the ironies of our constitutional development that the more electors a member represents the less politically significant he becomes. Theoretically a member is a representative, not a delegate; in the words of Burke he owes his constituents "not his industry only, but his judgment". But the last fifty years have seen a decrease in the power of the Commons, and a corresponding increase in the political importance of the Cabinet and the electorate. The vast increase in the size of the electorate from one to thirty millions has led, as we have seen, to the political supremacy of that electorate, which constitutes a serious challenge to the legislative supremacy of Parliament, and has tended towards the eclipse of the individual member. Whilst

the payment of members may have added to their economic security, it has cost them a certain amount of social prestige. The nineteenth century member was unpaid, and therefore rich; and so, in the popular estimation, worthy of respect. The development of party organisation has meant that candidates to-day are bound by party. They stand for election with the party label attached, and if elected, they are expected to vote in the interests of the party. To-day, when elections are fought on a national stage, the electorate regards the member not as an individual but as a unit of a party organisation. Within the House itself the increase in legislative business has considerably curtailed the privileges of the member. The various restrictions on debate—the closure, the kangaroo and the guillotine,—the rigid time table for bills, have decreased the opportunity for members to put forward private bills. The Commons exists to-day less to initiate legislation than to register legislation initiated by the Cabinet, which has thus become the first chamber of the legislative machine.

Yet another feature in the decline of the Commons is the emergence of class divisions among members. The nineteenth century House might divide over protection or Home Rule, but there was a certain amount of agreement on fundamentals. Members represented the same class interests and they had the same political philosophy. To-day differences in birth, education, wealth, have led to a fundamental divergence in political philosophy. One has only to consider the number of directorships held by Conservative members,¹ and the financial, industrial and landowning interests represented, to appreciate that the class divisions of the nation are being reflected in the Commons, and that the homogeneity of the nineteenth century has been destroyed.

¹ In 1931, 188 members held 691 directorships. See Greaves *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9.

The House of Commons is a temporary body, brought into existence at a general election, and terminating that existence at a dissolution. Originally, parliaments were frequent—in the fourteenth century there were often two or three in a year. It was Richard II, an adept at “packing” his parliaments, who invented the idea of keeping the same parliament in existence for a long period, and calling it together from time to time in different “sessions”. When the idea was once accepted, it came to be recognised that a parliament remained in existence until dissolved, or until the death of the King. An attempt to curb royal influence was, however, made in 1694 when the Triennial Act limited the existence of a single parliament to three years. The fear of Jacobite unrest led to the Septennial Act in 1716, which prolonged the period to seven years. This Act remained in force until the Parliament Act of 1911, when it was thought desirable that, since the powers of the Lords were being curtailed, the Commons should be more closely dependent upon the electorate: and the term was reduced to five years. Parliament can, however, prolong its own life indefinitely; it did so by four years in 1716, and during the last war it lengthened its lease of life four times, reaching a total period of seven and a half years.

The House of Commons has three main functions. It receives the annual financial statement of the country; it criticises the administration of the government, when announcements of policy are made to it; and it has the final authority over all legislative measures. Yet, as we have already suggested, it is the Cabinet which in reality initiates legislation, and it is the Cabinet which, by its control over parliamentary debate and the party organisation, can decide which bills will, in the long run, be presented. The Commons may indicate amendments to a bill which its proposer accepts; but so may many other bodies by direct representations to the people, and to the

minister concerned. The Commons is the stage at which proposed legislation is revised; but it is extremely doubtful whether it performs this function as efficiently as it might.

In order to appreciate some of the criticisms and suggestions which follow, it will be necessary to give a brief outline of the process of legislation. A public bill—which is a measure of policy affecting the whole community—normally passes through five stages in the Commons before it proceeds to the Lords. The first reading of a bill is a formality—the announcement of the title of the bill, and the seeking of permission to introduce it, which is always granted. In the second reading, the general principles of the bill are discussed, and if it is passed, it then proceeds to the Committee Stage. Here the bill is discussed in detail, either by a Standing Committee of some forty to sixty members, representing the political complexion of the House; or, if the bill is a finance bill or a special measure, to a committee of the whole house. Six standing committees are appointed for each parliament, but there is no special committee for any particular bill. The bill is then reported back to the House, in the form settled by the Committee, and is discussed clause by clause. If passed, the bill is then ready for the third reading, when the general principles of the bill as amended by the Committee are discussed by the House. If the bill passes this final stage, it is then sent to the Lords, where it undergoes a similar process. If accepted without amendment, it receives the royal assent and becomes law; if amended by the Lords it goes back to the Commons. If they accept the amendments only the royal assent is necessary for it to become law; if the amendments are rejected, future procedure is governed by reference to the Parliament Act of 1911.¹ Money bills can, under this act, be sent over the heads of the Lords for the royal assent; and the Lords may not amend such a bill. Moreover, money bills can

¹ See Chap. XIV., p. 101.

only be introduced by a minister in the Commons and must not contain any extraneous matter. A private bill is introduced in a petition for leave by the persons interested and then goes to the Examiner of standing orders in Parliament. If the Examiner passes it, it goes to the Commons for its second reading, and it is then considered by a small committee who hear the promoters of the bill and its opponents. This procedure is judicial, and eminent council are employed to represent the interests involved. If the bill passes this Committee Stage, it goes to the Commons for its third reading and so through the normal stages of a bill.

The main defects of the House of Commons as part of the legislative machine are:

- (1) Insufficient time. Government business has so increased in the last fifty years that there is considerable competition for introducing bills.
- (2) Much modern legislation is so technical in character that members cannot be expected fully to understand it. This leads to a need for lengthy discussion, and for some technical advice being available for members.
- (3) Defects of drafting due partly to haste and partly to the fact that 615 members are inefficient as a drafting committee.
- (4) Private bills may often be rejected, if there is ever time for their introduction, because the bill has no electoral value, or because no government department will support it, or because it may antagonise one section of the government's supporters.
- (5) An unduly lengthy legislative process, a relic of the leisurely lawmaking of the nineteenth century.

The pressure of legislative business has become so great that many proposals have been made for the

devolution of legislative powers. The delegation of certain legislative powers to ministers might certainly relieve the House of much of its formal business; but the suggestion to give local authorities legislative powers is open to the objection that it would also mean granting them discretionary powers. A more radical suggestion comes from Ramsay Muir, who suggests devolution of powers to regional authorities for Scotland, Wales, and seven areas in England, to cover such departments of government as agriculture, health, housing, education, poverty, local government and public order. This raises difficult questions of finance, however, and it is probable that so much co-ordinating legislation would be necessary that very little time would be saved to the Commons. Regional devolution to Scotland and Wales alone might be desirable for some reasons, but it is doubtful whether the saving of Parliamentary time so obtained would be sufficient to justify the expense involved. Functional devolution to independent boards and commissions would involve the same dangers of corruption as any other form of devolution. Government is in fact a single problem which demands unified control; and even the suggestion of the Webbs' that there should be a political and a social parliament does not allow for the possibility that an electorate might vote for entirely inconsistent foreign and economic policies, and elect parliaments which are fundamentally opposed.¹ All forms of devolution present so many difficulties that it would be better to look to reform of the existing procedure of the House.

That such a reform is practicable Mr. Ivor Jennings has shown.² There is considerable room for improvement in the drafting of bills. An adequate staff for the Parliamentary Counsels' Office would expedite parliamentary business: whilst drafting facilities for private members'

¹ For a fuller discussion of devolution, see W. Ivor Jennings, *Parliamentary Reform*, Gollancz, 1934.

² Jennings, *op. cit.*

bills might be provided by submitting the bill for redrafting after the second reading. The practice of the Friday ballot for private members' bills might be discontinued, as it affords no guarantee of the importance of the bill, and the same purpose could be served more efficiently under the Ten Minutes' Rule. The number of parliamentary committees should be increased, and membership should be restricted to the more manageable total of about twenty-five. There should in particular be a special standing committee for each department which legislates frequently. Members of a particular committee would then become specialists; they will gain a knowledge and a technique which will enable them to exercise a greater influence over the responsible minister and their colleagues in the House. The committee will of course reflect the political character of its parent body, and so the minister concerned need not fear unjust restriction or obstruction. An efficient and expert committee of this kind would mean that debate on the report stage could be justifiably restricted; and in any case the debate on the financial resolution, which now takes up so much of the time of the House, might be replaced by discussion by the Standing Committee on Finance. In such ways could the Commons be made more efficient not merely as a legislative body, but as a body whose function it is to make constructive criticism and to offer expert advice.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

WHILST the bicameral nature of the legislative body of this country has served as an example for many other constitutions, it is a significant fact that no other second chamber is similarly constituted. The continued existence of the House of Lords in its present form can only be explained by reference to the gradual growth of our constitution, our respect for tradition, our dislike for radical reform, and our obsequiousness to the privileged classes. With the Crown, it forms the only bulwark of the principle of hereditary privilege; and it is perhaps this characteristic similarity which has enabled it to survive so long.

The House of Lords to-day consists of over 700 members. There are 28 Irish peers, elected for life by their fellow peers; 16 Scottish peers similarly elected for the parliamentary term; the two archbishops, the bishops of London, Winchester and Durham, and twenty-one other bishops in order of seniority, all of whom sit for life. So do the seven Lords of Appeal, who form the highest court in the land, and whose qualification is that they should have had a distinguished legal career of at least fifteen years. All the other members sit solely by virtue of their peerage. Even to-day the powers of the Lords are by no means inconsiderable. They—or by convention the Law Lords—form the highest appellate court in the United Kingdom; they have the right to decide claims to the peerage and to try any member of their own body. Their right to try anyone impeached by the House of Commons has now

apparently lapsed, since the last impeachment was over a hundred years ago. As a legislative body they may originate any bill except a money bill, and under the Parliament Act of 1911 they have a suspensive veto of about two years.

Since the power of the Crown to create hereditary peers is unlimited, it follows that there can be no defined limit to the size of the House of Lords. The House has in fact grown considerably. Originally there were more spiritual life peers than temporal hereditary peers; but in 1847 the number of Lords Spiritual was restricted to 26, when there were some 400 hereditary peers. On several occasions the threat to create new peers has had to be used to force the Lords to pass legislation, and on a few the threat was put into force. But whilst in 1711 twelve new peers sufficed to pass the Treaty of Utrecht, and in 1784 seventeen to defeat Fox's India Bill, in 1910 the Prime Minister had to contemplate the creation of several hundred in order to pass the Parliament Act. The present size of the chamber not only impairs the effectiveness of such a device as the creation of new peers, but should render effective legislation difficult. However, the average attendance at the House is about 80; and the following figures from Greaves are enlightening¹: 111 peers never voted between 1919 and 1931; more than half the peers never spoke, and only 98 spoke on the average more than once a year. Nor can we fairly expect to obtain the impartiality from the House of Lords which we demand of an effective Second Chamber. Landowning, industrial and commercial interests are so heavily represented² that bills are frequently discussed from the point of view of the interests concerned; whilst the predominantly Conservative nature of the House tends to make almost every bill a party issue. The House of Lords has in short three major defects; its size, the comparative wealth of its

¹ Greaves, *British Constitution*, p. 53.

² *Ibid*, p. 54.

members, and their class consciousness; and all three derive from the hereditary nature of the constitution.

In the eighteenth century the lords were mainly land-owners, and exercised a still considerable influence upon the government by their nominees in the Commons. When the nature of the Commons changed after 1832, and they tended to represent the plutocracy of finance and commerce, there might have been some justification for the Lords delaying the hasty legislation of a far from representative lower house; but they tended to ally themselves with the conservatives and to oppose every progressive measure. Their legislative record is indeed an iniquitous one. Irish landlords in the Upper House must bear the responsibility for postponing Home Rule for a generation, just as English landed interests in the present century have stultified every progressive agrarian measure. They have consistently opposed every measure of political reform, from the Reform Bill of 1832 to the Plural Voting Bill of 1906; whilst their attitude to more recent reform bills has been definitely obstructionist. From the earliest labour legislation the industrial and commercial interests in the Lords have carefully protected their own class. Lest popular education should evoke criticism of their existence and imperil their position, they opposed the repeal of the paper duties in the middle of the last century, and more recently they managed to postpone for six years the raising of the school leaving age to 15. Nor does this represent the full toll, for we cannot tell how many bills were killed before they were ever presented. The record of the House of Lords has been a record of partisanship, of the protection of their class and of their party. That that record has passed almost unchallenged by the Commons is due partly to the fact that the Lords have attacked only progressive governments, and partly to the fact that they have restrained from interfering in the realms of foreign policy and finance.

On the one recent occasion when the Lords did interfere in finance—when they rejected Lloyd George's budget of 1909—a major constitutional crisis occurred, and the whole question of the power of the Lords was brought up. The result was the Parliament Act of 1911, which provided that the House of Lords could not amend or reject a bill which the Speaker had certified to be a money bill; and that any bill which was passed by the Commons three times in three consecutive sessions was to become law. Originally intended to curtail the authority of the Lords, the Act is noteworthy for its moderation. The powers of the Lords were perhaps more closely defined, but hardly different from what they had been in practice before. The introduction of the delaying power, by which the Lords may hold up legislation for a maximum period of two years, has considerably weakened the force of the threat to create new peers, or to dissolve; whilst the readiness of the Lords since 1911 to oppose progressive governments does not suggest any considerable diminution in their powers.

There seems then to be no valid argument for the retention of the House of Lords; but there are a number of arguments usually put forward in support of a second chamber. It is said that there is a need for the examination and revision of bills brought from the House of Commons, where the pressure of business is so great that it has been obliged to act under such special rules limiting debate as the closure, the guillotine, and the Kangaroo. It is argued that this would prevent hasty legislation, particularly when the Commons is not really representative of public opinion. But we have seen that there is good reason to suppose that the measures of one party only would be so discussed and delayed by the existing House of Lords; whilst the present tendency is more towards undue delay in legislation than towards undue haste. In any case it is doubtful whether a chamber of over 700 members is the

best fitted to deal with technical questions of revision, which are more suited for a committee of drafting experts. Finally, to-day the Commons itself is in effect a second chamber, for the majority of legislation originates from the cabinet.

More is to be said for the suggestion that a second chamber might usefully initiate legislation of a non-controversial character, which the pressure of government business prevents being introduced in the Commons. Or that a second chamber would provide an opportunity for the utilisation of the services of those who are not prepared to enter political life through the strife of the normal process of election. But official suggestions for the reform of the House of Lords all tend to be conservative, and to retain the hereditary principle in part. Thus the Cave Proposals of 1925 suggest the representation of hereditary peers, except those of the blood royal, who will have seats; the retention of the Law Lords and the Lords Spiritual; nominated representatives to be fixed at a certain annual number; and the repeal of the Parliament Act insofar as it excessively restricted the power of the Lords. The Salisbury proposals of 1932 went little further, except to include peeresses in their own right, and to suggest that the Parliament Act might be modified by a suggested referendum for general legislation and by a more explicit definition of what constitutes a money bill.

Assuming the need for an effective second chamber, four major questions arise: the method of election, its constitution, its powers, and its size. Nomination would in practice mean nomination by the Prime Minister, and would be dictated by party interests. Direct election would give the chamber a democratic basis, but might lead to conflicts with the First Chamber, since both would derive their authority from the same source. Indirect election would possess the same danger, whilst the Chamber itself would tend to be too conservative. Election by the first

chamber seems the most practicable; it would save considerable expense, and whilst it might create a partisan assembly there would be little danger of disputes over political principle. Election by proportional representation would give each party in the First Chamber adequate representation; and it has been suggested that a body about half the size of the present House of Commons would be most efficient. The term of election should be fixed; to make it dependent on the life of the First Chamber would be merely to duplicate the two houses and to give members of the second Chamber a vested interest in preventing a dissolution. A period of ten years, with half the members retiring every five years, would probably meet the case. As for its composition, the Law Lords are useful and might be retained; but there seems very little argument for the election of peers as peers. The important thing is to ensure that no single class, creed, economic interest or party is unfairly represented. In view of the different composition of this suggested second chamber there should be no need to alter the existing powers of the House of Lords.

CHAPTER XV

THE CABINET

THE Cabinet is the directing body of national policy. Its most obvious function is that of co-ordination, of seeing that the individual measures of any department of Government are in line with the general policy of the Government. As an executive committee it can therefore give more weight to the varying claims of those ministers who compose it than does a dictatorship; but from this it must follow that it is also less decisive than authoritarian government. In its general policy it must endeavour to interpret public opinion, and, where necessary, to lead that opinion into those channels which the Government considers to be the best. It is then at once interpretative and formative; as the body mainly responsible for the initiation of legislation it must remember that it has a duty not only to those who have put it into power, but to those who in the future will be prepared to accept or criticise that legislation.

Cabinet Government has only slowly developed. Until the Civil War of the seventeenth century the Government was carried on by royal ministers, whose sole qualification was that they were favourites of the king. The constitutional struggles of the Stuarts showed that the monarchy must keep on good terms with the legislature, and the policy of the royal ministers must be acceptable to Parliament. This was ultimately, but slowly, secured by Cabinet Government, which grew almost imperceptibly out of government by the Privy Council. The Cabinet itself was formed from the inner circle of the Privy Council, which was recognised as the Cabinet by the end of Charles

II's reign (1685); it was however composed of members who were not necessarily in agreement, either with each other or with Parliament. Yet Cabinet Government was opposed both by Parliament and the Crown; both William III and Anne disliked drawing their ministers from one party, since they thought that a divided Cabinet would increase royal power. The increase in the strength of the House of Commons after 1689, and the growth of the party system, led to the first of the conventions of Cabinet Government—the convention of political homogeneity, that ministers should be drawn from one political party. Since control of the Commons was the first essential, it followed that the Cabinet must be drawn from the party having a majority in the House. The necessity of presenting a united front to the King and to Parliament resulted in the principle of the collective responsibility of the whole Cabinet for the decisions of any one of their number. This convention has led to considerable difficulties, and has not always been observed. Occasionally a minister is censured individually, either by his colleagues or Parliament, and he alone resigns, as Sir Samuel Hoare resigned in 1935 over the Hoare-Laval pact. The convention was more drastically ignored in 1932 when the National Government adopted Tariff Reform, and its Free Trade members seceded. A close connection between Cabinet and Parliament is essential, for obviously the Cabinet can announce policy and meet criticism more effectively if its members are members of parliament, and preferably of the Commons. Finally, secrecy of Cabinet meetings and outward unanimity of opinion are necessary corollaries to collective responsibility and real freedom of discussion.

Like all committees the Cabinet has tended to expand in size. The increase in the functions of the State has led to an increase in the number of departments, and this is partly responsible for a larger Cabinet, although not all ministers hold Cabinet rank. There is nothing to prevent the

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Prime Minister from elevating to the Cabinet a junior minister, such as the Attorney General, without changing his office. One reason for the increase in the number of Cabinet Ministers may be the desire to reward or recognise some particularly able politician. In practice there appears to be no need for a large Cabinet, as the Prime Minister can request the attendance of any particular minister whose advice may be needed. The average size of the Cabinet since the war seems to have been about twenty, which is considerably in excess of the optimum, variously estimated to be between five and ten. It is noteworthy that the War Cabinet consisted of only five members, most of whom were not hampered by departments. Obviously too small a Cabinet cannot secure adequate consent for its policy: and too large a Cabinet will mean indecisiveness and delay.

Professor H. J. Laski has made some interesting researches into the personnel of the Cabinet.¹ Whilst from 1830 to 1902 eight of the eleven prime ministers were sons of peers, no prime minister since 1902 has been a peer or a son of a peer. But whilst the commoners of the nineteenth century represented landed interests, those of the twentieth, like Baldwin and the Chamberlains, represent industrial interests. The aristocratic hold on Cabinet positions has decreased since the middle of last century; but the aristocracy has been replaced largely by the upper middle class. With the notable exceptions of John Burns and Arthur Henderson, no son of a working man sat in a Cabinet until 1924, and it is only in Labour Cabinets that the working classes have been represented. Thus class divisions are as marked in the executive as they are in the legislature; and party divisions correspond approximately to those of class.

The Cabinet consists of party leaders with parliamentary experience; they have been trained for government in the

¹ H. J. Laski, *The British Cabinet, a Study of its Personnel, 1801-1924*.

opposition, and frequently have had experience of office in previous governments. The period of political apprenticeship is a long one, and although the Labour Governments introduced a large proportion of members inexperienced in government, the general tendency is for Cabinet Ministers to be of quite advanced age, whilst prime ministers rarely attain that office before they are sixty. Quite apart from the lack of energy and resource which is the inevitable attribute of a government of old men, there is bound to be a considerable disparity of outlook between the governors of the older generation and the governed of the younger generation.

The Prime Minister is unquestionably the most powerful member of the Government. He is the chairman of the Cabinet since the King no longer attends Cabinet meetings. He decides what items shall appear upon the Cabinet agenda, and upon him falls the main task of co-ordinating policy, which is of the essence of Cabinet Government. He is helped by the Cabinet Secretariat, with a permanent secretary, which prepares all Cabinet agenda. The business of the Cabinet, like that of the Commons, has so increased of recent years that a large amount of its work is performed through committees such as the Defence Policy and Requirements Committee, the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the Economic Advisory Council. Whilst the Prime Minister and the ministers specially concerned sit upon these committees, they are also open to co-opt any outside experts whom they may want.

The Prime Minister has in his hands the making and unmaking of governments. He can appoint to Cabinet offices, and he can get rid of a colleague by a reshuffling of Cabinet posts. He exercises considerable patronage, being responsible for the granting of all honours, including peerages. He controls all important appointments in the administrative and judicial services; and he is the chief adviser of the sovereign on all actions of an official character.

Nor is his power in the Commons any less than in the Cabinet, for by his right to request a dissolution he holds the political future of all members in his hands; and through the party whips he organises the time table of the House just as he arranges that of the Cabinet.

With the aid of the press, the newsreel and the radio the Prime Minister assumes a public personality. His peculiarities are capitalised, whether they be pipe or umbrella, and the public are so deluded that criticism of his policy is stifled. Spectacular and well publicised actions will serve to keep him in the eye of the public, whose memory is so notoriously short-lived that they lose sight of the main issue. Particularly in times of crisis is this true, when the preoccupation of the public mind is with the vital question of the moment; but it is doubtful whether so to delude the public is in the long run the best policy.

Considerable as are the powers of the Cabinet and of its Chairman, it must be borne in mind that there is always the check of alternative government. The continual criticism of government policy which comes from the opposition benches means that when and if the Cabinet loses its hold on the majority in the House of Commons, or over the electorate, another administration will be ready to step into its place. It is this check upon ministerial irresponsibility which is the main safeguard of democratic government; and it is this which explains why the most long-lived governments have always been those whose policy has been cautious and not radical, who have chosen to interpret, rather than to create, public opinion.

CHAPTER XVI

PARTY GOVERNMENT

PROFESSOR MACIVER has defined a political party as "an association organised in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government."¹ Effective government within a democratic framework is indeed impossible without party organisation; and it is only with the approach of something like representative government that the party system emerges. Whilst the vital question was, as in Stuart England, the residence of political power, issues of policy did not arise. The Glorious Revolution of 1689 made Parliament politically supreme; and parties began to form within the House of Commons. As the electorate gradually assumed political supremacy during the last hundred years, so parties grew up within the State.

The origin of parties in England has been variously assigned to religious divergences in the reign of Elizabeth, to the division between the Roundheads and Cavaliers during the Civil War, and to the struggle over the Exclusion Bill of 1679. It seems fairly generally accepted that they arose over the constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century, and that the Whigs and Tories were the ancestors of the nineteenth century Liberals and Conservatives. Certain it is that the first half of the eighteenth century witnessed the almost undisturbed supremacy of the Whigs; and that by their party organisation they tacitly accepted the convention that ministers were responsible, not to the monarch, but to parliament, and so, indirectly, to the

¹ R. M. MacIver, *The Modern State*, O.U.P., 1932, p. 396.

electorate. Gradually, during the last two centuries, party government has become an essential of parliamentary government.

It is difficult to imagine how, without the party system, government could be carried on save under a despotism; or how the electorate, the ultimate political authority, could control government. For the system provides the voter with a choice between alternative rulers, and the alternations of parties in office illustrate the merits and dangers of alternative policies. Government without party must mean either the dictatorship of those in power, or the bewildering conflict of numerous contending factions. And yet it is easy to criticise the party system. It is argued that party divides and weakens, that it leads to faction fights in which patriotism is subordinated to party interests, that it creates opposition for the sake of opposition. If the purpose of an election is to ascertain the will of the electorate, and to put into office that government which can command the support of the majority of the people, then His Majesty's Opposition appears factious and futile. For in that opposition we have a set of paid obstructionists, of men whose duty it is to oppose; and there seems something to be said for the view that even "the best kind of party is in some sort a conspiracy against the nation." Perhaps the solution lies in Lord Balfour's suggestion, that as a nation we are so fundamentally at one that we can "afford safely to bicker"; whilst Bagehot has suggested, pursuing a similar line of thought, that party government is only permanent and possible because it is mild. To what extent these conditions obtain to-day is, as we shall see, extremely questionable; and it is certainly true that in Germany, Italy and Russia this discontent against the factiousness of parties has resulted in the formation of a nation-wide all-embracing party.

In spite of the mildness of the conflict between parties, of the mutual confidence which, until 1918, existed between

government and opposition, party organisation has become increasingly rigid. There is to-day little opportunity of any man being elected unless he accepts a party label; whilst within the house debates and divisions are more stereotyped, and the independent member is a rarity. In an earlier chapter we have noticed the decline in political significance of the individual member; and yet it is difficult to see how we can reconcile the independence of members with effective government. The vast increase in the electorate since the Reform Bill of 1867 has made necessary a more elaborate party organisation, whilst the increase in the amount of parliamentary business has made the time factor a vital one. The modern electorate, too, has been so politically educated by party organisation that it tends to look upon a candidate not so much as an individual as a representative of the party leader.

This rigidity might be mitigated if the British system of parliamentary government functioned under a multi-party system; for unquestionably the elaborate party organisation of to-day owes much to the fact that, except for a few isolated periods, we have had a two party system. Those who support a multi-party system would argue that it not only relaxes the rigidity of party organisation but that it avoids violent oscillations of policy. They frequently associate with their claim for a number of parties a demand for some form of proportional representation; and they are here supported by the obvious disproportion between votes and seats in our existing electoral system. Such a proposal would certainly give fuller representation to the diverse interests contained within the nation; in decreasing the control of party over members it would also assail the legislative supremacy of the Cabinet, and transfer much of the initiative for legislation to the commons. But it has already been suggested that modern law-making is of such immense proportions and so highly technical that the Commons is no longer an efficient

legislative chamber. The multi-party system has, moreover, other disadvantages. Its success as an effective method of government has not been substantiated by the experience of other countries, such as France, where it has made government notoriously unstable. For a multi-party system must mean either a coalition government, whose moderation will fail to satisfy its critics whilst disgusting its supporters; or a minority government which will spend its life manœuvring for support. The object of an election is presumably to allow the electorate to choose the government it desires; yet frequently under the multi-party system the choice of actual government has to be left to the elected chamber. The contrast between the effectiveness of a dictatorship and the dilatoriness of a democracy has been presented often enough; and here we are confronted by a similar choice, between a system which is representative but ineffective, and one which is effective but unrepresentative.

Party organisation extends beyond the Commons to the electorate, for the extension of the franchise after 1832 made some control essential. In the 'sixties of last century both Liberal and Conservative parties favoured central organisations, but effective organisation dates from the establishment of the Birmingham caucus by Joseph Chamberlain and Schnadhorst in the late 'seventies. Now both Conservative and Liberal parties are strongly organised on a representative basis from the smallest unit of the local ward, through the borough or county division, up to central headquarters. Local organisations, which are often under the direction of paid agents, attempt to maintain a majority in the constituency by holding periodical meetings, by various methods of propaganda, and by the selection of suitable candidates. Various auxiliary political organisations exist, such as the Primrose League and the Junior Imperial League for the Conservatives, which have their counterparts in the Liberal and Labour Parties.

The parties differ considerably, however, in the sources from which they obtain funds. The main support of the Conservative, and to a lesser extent of the Liberal Party, comes from the landowner, the industrialist and the financier; and their funds largely derive from the contributions of the wealthy. Whilst it is natural that these economic groups should support the party which is most concerned for their interests and privileges, the system has led to considerable abuses, and puts the Labour Party at a disadvantage. Contributors to party funds expect to be suitably rewarded in the Honours List; whilst for the safe Conservative seats a regular auction takes place. The Labour Party derives its funds to a minor extent from the small contributions of local labour parties, and to a considerable extent from Trade Unions, who virtually control not only the finances but the executive policy of the party. Quite apart from the propaganda value of appeals from eminent business men on behalf of the Conservative party, the influence of money must play a large part in elections. Election expenses are hard to verify and are probably falsified more frequently than is known; whilst the influence of the landed and moneyed class is of so delicate a nature as to be barely affected by such measures as the undue influence clause of the Corrupt Practices Act.

There is to-day a fundamental economic divergence between the Conservative and the Labour party. Until this century the two politically significant parties, Liberal and Conservative, were agreed upon fundamentals. They worked within the same constitutional framework, differing only in methods, and to a slight extent in the concessions which they were prepared to make to a clamouring electorate. There was an essential unity of purpose which made possible a continuity of policy, and which made one party easily reconciled to the electoral victory of the other. To-day, with the advent of the Labour Party, the

situation has materially altered. The publicly avowed policy of that party involves an attack upon the capitalist system, upon the economic framework within which the two older parties have been content to work. Professor Laski has stated the case brilliantly "A political democracy seeks, by its own inner impulses, to become a social and economic democracy. It finds the road thereto barred by the capitalist foundations upon which the political democracy is built. The validity of those foundations therefore becomes the central issue in politics."¹ Already since the war we have had two Labour governments; both were minority governments dependent upon Liberal support, and they accordingly worked within the capitalist framework in order to keep that support. No future Labour government can afford to fail as these Governments failed. Consequently neither Liberals nor Conservatives can look forward with equanimity to the accession to power of a Labour Government. Opposition within the House will no longer be "mild"; no longer shall we be able to "afford safely to bicker", for our agreement on fundamentals will no longer exist. All who refuse to accept the attack upon the capitalist system will unite, as they united in 1931, to oppose that attack.

Thus we are faced with a position in which the conservative elements in the state will violently oppose the progressive elements, in the country and in Parliament; in which all the bitterness and tenacity which vested interests involve will be shown; and in which the hitherto accepted convention of the mutual confidence of parties will be abrogated. The party system has existed for some two hundred and fifty years because the opposing parties in the state were agreed upon essentials; they were agreed upon those essentials because they represented the same social and economic interests, because they were, in fact,

¹ H. J. Laski, *Parliamentary Government in England*, Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 89.

merely separate wings of the same party. Any fundamental divergence, whether it be on the question of economic structure or that of foreign policy, will seriously imperil the effective working of the party system. That divergence is likely to occur in the future, and the question to be faced is whether the long, peaceful and successful history of party government can survive the shock. The alternative is dictatorship, whether of the right or of the left.

CHAPTER XVII

THE JUDICIARY

Acts of Parliament have to be applied and interpreted, and the body which performs this function is the Judiciary. It differs from the Executive and the Legislature in that it is a vast hierarchy of courts and judges, with procedure which is still bewildering enough to the lay mind. Some examination of the judicial system must then first be made before we can proceed to discuss its importance in the constitution of the country.

All persons accused of crime are brought in the first instance before magistrates sitting in a police court, or Petty Sessions. In all cases information of the alleged offence must be laid by someone who knows the facts. If the case is trivial, a summons to attend is usually issued; and in the event of non-attendance the case may be tried in the defendant's absence, or a warrant issued for his arrest. A warrant is always issued for grave offences. Petty Sessions sit daily in the large towns, and at frequent intervals in the country districts. The magistrates are either, for the large boroughs, borough magistrates or stipendiary magistrates; or for the ordinary Petty Sessions, two or more Justices of the Peace. They have the power to imprison up to a maximum of six months, to fine up to £50, to discharge the offender, place him on probation, or send him to Borstal. If the offence is an indictable offence—a more serious one—the case must be sent for trial to the Quarter Sessions or the High Court. Certain classes of indictable offences, notably those committed by children and those where the amount involved does not

exceed 40s. and where the defendant pleads guilty, can be dealt with summarily in Petty Sessions.

If the offence is serious it is committed to Quarter Sessions or to the High Court; and the function of the Petty Sessions in such cases is merely to make a preliminary examination of the facts, and, in particular, to grant or refuse bail. Quarter Sessions are held quarterly at stated times in every county; while more than one hundred boroughs have their own Quarter Sessions. In county sessions the judges are two or more Justices of the Peace; in borough sessions, the Recorder, who must be a barrister of not less than five years' standing, appointed by the Lord Chancellor and in receipt of a small salary. The Quarter Sessions can try all indictable offences committed to it for trial, except those which are punishable by death or penal servitude, and those which, like forgery and perjury, involve difficult questions of law. It might here be noticed that since Justices of the Peace are not legally trained, they must have expert legal assistance; in the Petty Sessions provided by the magistrates' clerk, and in Quarter Sessions by the Clerk of the Peace. The jurisdiction of Quarter Sessions also includes all appeals from convictions of courts of summary jurisdiction, and appeals concerning licensing, rating and poor law. Nearly all appeals are decided by the majority of Justices, no jury being necessary; but when cases come before Quarter Sessions as a Court of First Instance a petty jury must be empanelled. Some indication of the importance of the work of the Quarter Sessions is given by the fact that three quarters of the criminal trials in England take place in such courts.

At the head of the administration of criminal justice is the High Court of Justice, whether in London or at Assizes. Before an accused person can be put on trial, a bill of indictment, or written accusation, must be drawn up by the inferior court and presented to a Grand Jury,

consisting of a body of notables, varying in number from 12 to 25, of whom 12 must agree. If they think the evidence warrants trial a true bill is returned, and the case must be tried by a petty jury of twelve persons whose verdict must be unanimous. Accusation before a Grand Jury can be made directly, although a preliminary examination may be made by a justice. For the purpose of holding the High Court in different localities, England and Wales are divided into eight circuits, on each of which there are at least two assizes each year. For over a century now the Assize Court for the City of London and Middlesex has been established at the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey. One, and sometimes two, judges are assigned to each circuit.

Until 1907 there was technically no right of appeal, although the Home Secretary could intervene where questions of fact were in doubt. In 1907 the Court of Criminal Appeal was established, to which anyone convicted at Quarter Sessions or the Assizes can appeal on points of law, sentence, or fact. This court, which consists of the Lord Chief Justice and specially appointed judges of the King's Bench Division, has wide powers to alter sentences and to quash convictions. If the point of law involved is of public importance, appeal may be made, with the consent of the Attorney General, to the House of Lords.

In the administration of Civil Justice, the court to which there is easiest access is the County Court, established in 1846. For county court purposes England is divided into about five hundred districts, in each of which a court is generally held every month. The districts are grouped into fifty five circuits and a judge is assigned to each. Judges, appointed by the Lord Chancellor, must be barristers of at least 10 years' standing. They can try almost any case which does not involve more than £100, and appeal to the High Court is allowed in cases involving

more than £20. A jury of five may be demanded in cases involving more than £5, and may be used at the discretion of the judge in cases involving a smaller amount. In addition to County Courts there are also some twenty local Courts of Record which have survived. Their jurisdiction is limited and local, and among the most important are the City of London Court, the Lord Mayor's Court, the Bristol Tolsey Court, and the Liverpool Court of Passage.

The re-organisation of the administration of justice has been most marked in the superior Civil Courts. Until 1873 there were eight superior Courts of the First Instance; but a series of Judicature Acts of the last quarter of the nineteenth century re-organised the whole system. There is now one Supreme Court of Judicature, broadly divided into the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal. Within the framework of the former are three divisions:—

1. The King's Bench Division, with the Lord Chief Justice as President, assisted by seventeen judges.
2. The Chancery Division, under the Lord Chancellor and six judges.
3. The Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division, under a President and two judges.

Jury actions are rare except in the King's Bench Division, and even there are becoming less frequent. From the High Court appeal may be made to the Court of Appeal, which consists of the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, and five Lord Justices of Appeal. From the Court of Appeal an appeal lies to the House of Lords, provided that the appeal is certified as fit by two counsels on the case. The House of Lords as a final court of appeal consists of the Lord Chancellor, the Lords of Appeal in ordinary, and peers who have held high judicial office. The Privy Council was deprived of

all its jurisdiction in England by the Act of 1641 which abolished the Star Chamber, but it still remained the Supreme Court for the King's overseas dominions. This remnant of jurisdiction, unimportant at the time, has become important with the growth of the Empire; and appeals from dominion courts can now be heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, consisting of those members of the Privy Council who have held high judicial office, together with six Lords of Appeal.

It has long been recognised as essential that judges should be independent of political control and should be capable of executing the law impartially. Thus the Act of Settlement safeguarded the judiciary from royal interference by enacting that judges should hold their office as long as they conducted it efficiently, and should only be dismissed upon a resolution of both houses. Whilst the judiciary may thus be free from external influences, it is important to realise that judges are as human as the rest of mankind, and that they will tend, with rare exceptions, to interpret the law in terms of their own ideas of social justice. For the law is capable of wide interpretation; if it were not, there would be no need for law courts. Yet the majority of judges are selected from the same social class as the administrative services. They are largely recruited from the ranks of successful lawyers, whose profession it has been to defend the rights of property. The highest judges are appointed by the Prime Minister, county court judges and local magistrates by the Lord Chancellor; and magistrates in London and some towns by the Home Secretary. The possibility of the appointments being made, if not on a political, then at least on a class basis, is therefore considerable. Moreover the bulk of private law rests upon precedent which has been created by other judges; and many of the principles upon which the Common Law is based are opposed to the socialising tendencies of the modern state.

This is reflected in a number of instances. The attitude of the average bench to communism, the increasing tendency towards mass trials which can only confuse a jury composed of amateurs, the ready acceptance of the testimony of unsworn police witnesses as to the character of the accused, are but three examples of the influence of environment and education upon judges as a social class. It goes further than this, however. The judiciary frequently exceeds its proper function of interpreting the law in the spirit in which Parliament made it. "Sir Frederick Pollock has said that many judicial opinions are unintelligible, save upon the assumption that the judges did not like the effect of the legislation they were asked to interpret, and did their best to construe it away."¹ This is especially true of such social legislation as that affecting housing and questions of workmen's compensation, although the real conflict between legislature and judiciary will only become obvious when a government embarks upon a large scale programme of social reform. Then there will arise the danger that a system of administrative courts will have to be established to administer the law which the ordinary bench insists upon misinterpreting.²

Nor can criticism be confined to the bench. We have already seen the complicated system which exists; and despite the reforms of the last quarter of the nineteenth century the hierarchy of courts and the centralisation of the highest civil courts in London give an inevitable advantage to the wealthy. Our judicial system is more expensive in its costs to litigants than that of any other country except America. In spite of such concessions as the Poor Persons' Defence Act and the dock brief—which should be the right of every citizen and not a concession from above—it is generally recognised that justice is a monopoly in the hands of a highly organized profession.

¹ H. J. Laski, "*The Judicial Function*," *Politica*, 1936, p. 112.

² Laski, *Parliamentary Government*, p. 370.

It has been significantly remarked that we have a Public Prosecutor, but no Public Defender. Nor have we a Ministry of Justice, or any central body responsible for the reform of legal administration. Responsibility seems to be divided between the Home Secretary, the Lord Chancellor, and the Attorney General, and there has been a surprising indifference not only to the reform of the system, but even to the reform of such obviously inadequate laws as those regulating divorce, obscenity, and blasphemy.

During the last few years the public has been made aware of the encroachments of the judiciary. It is significant that in 1934 it was thought necessary to set up a National Council for Civil Liberties; it is even more significant that since its foundation that body has been fully occupied with individual cases, with public meetings and propaganda, and with representations in Parliament. The extension of police powers which is implied in the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, and the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934, the extension of the right of search which has occurred in a number of cases, and the general attitude of the police towards Communists—as in the various Fascist meetings and the notorious Urquhart case—cannot but raise the vital question of the extent of civil liberties to-day.¹

¹ For a discussion of these questions see W. H. Thompson, *Civil Liberties*, Gollancz, 1938.

CHAPTER XVIII

ADMINISTRATION

1. *The Civil Service*

WE have already noticed that the increase in the amount of State business has led to a considerable delegation of legislative powers; and it has naturally resulted in an enlargement of the administrative functions of government. At the apex of the administrative system of this country stand the ministries. It is their function to draw up policy, and to provide a justification of that policy for the minister in parliament. They must prepare estimates and obtain the necessary sanction for the expenditure involved in the application of policy. Finally, it is their task to see that policy is applied. In every one of their functions the departments of government are supported by the Civil Service.

The prominence which the Civil Service has achieved during the last forty years has been due partly to the increased burden of duties which it has had to shoulder, and partly to an improvement in the quality of the service itself. Since the reforms introduced in the Home Civil Service by Gladstone's government in 1870, the best men in the country have been attracted to its ranks. In the place of the evils of the old system of patronage we have to-day a unified service, recruited almost entirely by open competition, with its posts broadly divided into executive and intellectual for policy making, and clerical for mechanical and routine work. The organisation reflects the educational system of the country; the lowest and most numerous group, consisting of some 330,000 employed in

the dockyards, arsenals and Post Office, are recruited by an elementary examination; the 70,000 clerical assistants by an examination rather below the standard of the School Certificate of university examining bodies. Some 16,000 executive officers enter the service either through the gateway of the searching examination for that class, or by infrequent promotion from the clerical class; whilst the 1,300 members of the administrative group are recruited from the universities, having to pass an examination of the standard of that for a final honours degree.¹

Obviously, from this brief description of methods of recruitment, it follows that the administrative grade, which is the keystone of the whole system, is composed of men with a university training—and generally from the older universities—who are therefore of the same class as that which governs. Ministers and administrators have therefore the same social, cultural and intellectual background; they adopt the same attitude to the fundamental question of the constitution of the State. This largely explains the harmony in which ministers and their departments have worked in the past; but it raises the vital question whether a service so recruited would work as harmoniously with ministers carrying out a policy which attacked the premisses which the administrators had been brought up to regard as fundamental. To take the most optimistic view, with all the good will in the world an administrator will not be capable of administering a policy of which he disapproves as effectively as one of which he approves. His attitude will be conditioned by his social and intellectual outlook, and he will inevitably and perhaps unconsciously maximise difficulties and minimise merits.

Recruitment by competitive examination has obvious merits; and in so far as that system gives scope for the

¹I am indebted for these facts and figures, and for much of what follows to Laski: *Parliamentary Government in England*.

candidate of general culture rather than the specialist, it should produce administrators of wide sympathies. Admittedly, the examination system has the intrinsic defect that it is weighted heavily in favour of the mathematician and the scientist; whilst the high percentage of marks awarded for the interview provide a method of excluding the socially undesirable. Yet it tends to produce a higher level of open-mindedness than any method of selection. There is still the danger that the narrow social class from which the administrators are drawn, the limited experience which they possess of the problems with which they have to deal, the tradition of continuity of policy which the service has developed, will cause the Civil Service to be a conservative and reactionary body. The history of the distressed areas, of unemployment insurance, of penal reform, to name but three major topics, illustrate the danger inherent in all administration, the danger of a soulless, statistical, conservative approach to problems of vital economic urgency. A widening of the social experience of established civil servants, and possibly a widening of the basis of recruitment, would tend to mitigate this evil.

Something might be done by increasing the possibilities of transfer from one grade of the service to another. At the moment the grades of the service are too rigid; promotion below the administrative grade goes largely by seniority, for the type of work involved does not call for exceptional capacity of any kind. Opportunities to demonstrate such exceptional capacity are not many, and the service seems to be unwilling to experiment by providing those opportunities. Some infiltration of lower grade ability into the upper ranks of the hierarchy would do much to break down the narrow class conditioning of the administrative grade.

Civil servants are prohibited from engaging in political work; and this sometimes extends even to local government.

This restriction is unduly severe upon the lower grades of the service, and in fact does not apply to workers in the dockyards or the arsenals. At the other end of the scale it is obviously impossible to contemplate the incursion into politics of the makers of policy; and the difficulty of drawing the dividing line between groups is almost insuperable. There is also the administrative problem involved in the uncertainties of a political career, which would raise the delicate question of the re-absorption of former civil servants. The problem of the written word is an equally thorny one; a civil servant should obviously not be permitted publicly to criticise his department, and yet he should be allowed to develop and publish his own views on administrative organisation. That a certain amount of publicity is desirable in the various branches of the service is recognised by the publication of official reports, and by the appointment, in some departments, of Public Relations Officers. Professor Laski has argued¹ that contact between the public and the administrative services can best be secured by an extension of the system of advisory committees of citizens, a notable example of which exists in the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education. This would not only improve the political education of the citizen, but would provide a much wider basis of experience upon which the responsible minister could draw.

The increase in delegated legislation has led to a number of protests against the evils of bureaucratic dictatorship, one of the most notable being the work of the Lord Chief Justice.² Yet provided that parliament has the opportunity, if desired, of scrutinising the proposals of a department, and provided that the interests concerned are adequately consulted, the delegation of certain types of legislation seems not only justifiable but, in face of the vast amount of parliamentary business, essential. Where a department

¹ Laski, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

² Hewart, *The New Despotism*.

exercises judicial powers the problem is more complicated, but granted that officials are not under any pressure from their superiors, there is no reason to suppose that a tribunal of administrators should be any more partial than a court of law. The danger in fact lies not so much in a usurpation of the judicial powers by administrators, as in the control of the administrative process by judges.

2. *Local Government*

The vast increase in the social services provided by the state during the present century has increased the burden of the work of local authorities. In 1900 the social services cost 19s. a head; to-day they cost about £9 a head, or a total for the whole country of about £400 million. Some examination of the functions, finance, and organisation of local government authorities is therefore necessary.

There are some 1,600 county, borough, and district councils, whose powers, created and limited by statute, yet vary considerably throughout the country. Generally they are allowed by Parliament to provide some services, by what are known as "adoptive acts"; and they are commanded by the same body to provide others. The services provided are too well known to need much comment. They can be broadly divided into the protection of the public, which is provided by the police; their welfare, as in provisions for education, hospitals, health services, water and drainage; and their convenience, as in the provision of roads and various forms of transport. The extent of the services provided is by no means uniform; in fact, the essence of local government is that it should provide for local conditions, which naturally vary considerably.

Local government authorities have four main sources of revenue for maintaining these services. A considerable part of the revenue is derived from rents on property owned by the authority, and from receipts for direct services

rendered, such as the provision of transport, electricity and gas. About a fifth of the total revenue is raised by loans, either by borrowing from the state or by floating a public loan; and this method demands either that the state should approve the nature of the proposed expenditure and the method suggested for redeeming the debt, or that the credit of the authority should stand high with the public. A third, and considerable, source of revenue is the grants made by the Exchequer for services of such national importance as education, police, roads and housing; but it must be remembered that the receipt of such a grant involves government inspection and supervision, and so increases the control of the central authority.

Local rates, which councils are empowered but not compelled to levy, form probably the main source of revenue. The present system of assessment upon the rateable value of property is a relic from the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, which, in an endeavour to levy a poor rate, fixed upon a man's immovable property as the standard. How far such a standard reflects either the services rendered, or the ability of owner or tenant to pay, is a debatable point. The assessment is made upon one particular only—the size and position of the house inhabited; no distinction is made between the successful and the unsuccessful man, and no account is taken of the fact that rent constitutes a considerable proportion of the income of a poor man. The argument that people pay in proportion to the benefits they receive from local government services can hardly be maintained when it is considered that the wealthier classes do not take advantage of many of the free services provided, and that in fixing the assessment no account is taken of the size of a man's family. Perhaps the main argument against the present system of assessment is that it inevitably leads to overcrowding and slums; and the services made necessary by the spreading slums lead only to an increased rate, and so drive the slum dweller to a

still worse slum. There seems to be no reason why the local revenue could not be raised, as it is in France and Germany, by a local income tax; the administrative details should not prove insuperable in view of the organisation already existing for the levying of a national income tax. If the present system must be retained, the least that might be done is so to weight the method of assessment as to prevent its more obvious inequalities.

Only ratepayers and their wives are entitled to vote at local elections, although the rate may be paid indirectly by being included in the rent. The local government franchise is thus narrower than the parliamentary, for it excludes sons and daughters of the house, and lodgers without their own furniture, tending to emphasise the qualifications of property and a mature age. It has been estimated that whilst 70 per cent of the population qualify as parliamentary electors, the corresponding figure for local government electors is only 50 per cent. Nor, save in exceptional circumstances, is much interest displayed in local elections, and rarely is the poll more than half the electorate. Councillors are generally unpaid, although under the Local Government Act of 1929 County Councils are empowered to pay the expenses of their councillors. The factors of distance—especially in County Councils—and time tend to restrict membership of councils either to the leisured class or to those, such as tradesmen, who have a particular interest in the activities of the local authority.

There is no unified system, no common method of recruitment for local government officers, although, under pressure from the National Association of Local Government Officers and the Institute of Public Administration, some universities have introduced courses of training. There seems to be little co-ordination of the various departments of a local authority, and the general tendency is to appoint as officials those with technical rather than

administrative qualifications. Thus the Clerk of the Council is more frequently a lawyer than an administrator; whilst the medical officer, whose duties are largely administrative, is too often selected largely upon his professional qualifications. There is a most urgent need to establish common standards of recruitment, to emphasise the administrative aspect of the work, and so widen the sources from which local government officials can be drawn.

Apart from a revision of the methods of assessment, and of the recruitment of officials, some reform in areas and powers seems necessary. The tendency of local government areas to increase should be encouraged, as it should result in more efficient working, and a more specialised and efficient staff. Together with this should go some increase in powers, which should enable authorities to proceed with such municipal activities as the establishment of a transport system or a savings bank without having on each occasion to obtain the consent of parliament. At the same time certain services—notably housing and police—are perhaps better administered nationally. The vast increase in the social services to-day does at least demand some reorganisation and reintegration of our administrative system, both locally and nationally.

3. *Public Utility Boards*

It is the fear that the administrator might be cramped by parliamentary interference which has led to the creation of a number of boards and commissions which act as administrative bodies. Prominent among these are the Port of London Authority, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the London Passenger Transport Board, and the various marketing boards established for milk, hops, potatoes and bacon. The principle upon which the public utility board is based is that initiative and freedom of action is essential in an economic undertaking; and so ministerial responsibility is applied only for the general

outlines of policy. Yet there is always the danger that the absence of criticism may lead to stagnation and complacency; whilst the Post Office has proved the success of an economic undertaking managed by the State. More adequate parliamentary control of these bodies is needed, beyond that provided in the annual report; and where a monopoly is created there should be some method of periodic review and ventilation of grievances, such as is provided by the renewal of the Charter of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Delegation of legislative and administrative functions may be essential to-day; but it will only prove practicable when precautions are taken to ensure adequate responsibility to the public; and there is a reasonable case for the establishment of a Ministry of Economic Affairs, which could undertake the co-ordination of the economic activities of the state.

CHAPTER XIX

DEMOCRACY

It has been customary to regard the last hundred years as marking the achievement of democracy in England. We speak of the radicalism of Paine and Godwin; we comment on the democratic ideas and revolutionary fervour of such poets as the young Wordsworth, Southey, Byron and Shelley. The history of the political theory of the first half of the nineteenth century is largely the history of rational utilitarianism, of Owen, Bentham, and Mill; and we regard the legalisation of Trade Unions, the extension of the franchise, the numerous factory acts, the introduction of popular education, as the tangible achievements of our democratic impulse. And yet, it is a noticeable fact that the demand for popular power in England has taken the form of a demand for the removal of concrete grievances; the demand has shown itself in movements against oppressive taxation, against the tyranny of the court or the Government, against the hardness of heart of landlords and industrialists. The people have demanded popular concessions; the concessions granted, they have not thought to question the basis of the society which provoked such demands. As a race, we have a feeble sense of equality. Whether we fear that equality would mean drab uniformity, or whether, as in the case of communism, we imperfectly understand the theory, and fear to lose what little we have, most of us still accept the traditional distinction of rich and poor, of privileged and unprivileged. Our democratic constitution retains anomalous hereditary institutions; our obsequiousness to

titles, is notorious; while we see nothing illogical in believing in democracy and yet indulging in childish displays of mass hysteria on every state occasion. The democracy of the nineteenth century was indeed but the half-hearted achievement of political democracy; most of the popular concessions were the result of the humanitarian movements of the time. This was accepted as democracy because its achievement coincided with a period of economic prosperity, which made those concessions possible. Our faith in democracy was but a part of our faith in progress. To-day we are beginning to question progress itself. The virtual disappearance of the party system, the virtual dictatorship of a cabinet which is representative neither of legislature nor electorate, and the threat to the social services which armament expenditure and industrial depression have brought, raise the vital question of the future of democratic government in England.

Liberty we have largely conceived as a negative conception, as the removal of restrictions. The concept of liberty as the positive achievement of a full life is certainly no popular concept; and granted that we are free to act in certain directions we seem content to accept a representative system grounded in inequality as the realisation of democracy. One of the most neglected aspects of our democratic thought has been our failure to realise that social and economic equality is the essential basis of political democracy. For it is only in this century that political democracy has been in any way interpreted as economic equality. Our acceptance of the traditional social order, our conviction that political leadership was the privilege of the upper classes, and the belief that working-class movements could best achieve their ends outside the political framework, all meant that our economic demands were few, slowly formulated and granted rather as concessions than rights. This reliance upon associations outside

the political organisation has meant that we have not been adequately concerned with the development and reform of institutions for expressing and implementing the popular demand. Representative institutions were criticised only in so far as they were unrepresentative; the idea that political democracy and economic structure were closely related was not sufficiently realised, since our institutional framework provided us with those economic concessions which we wanted. It cannot be too much emphasised that those concessions were only possible in a period of prospering trade and expanding markets. To-day, with trade declining and markets contracting, further concessions are unlikely; and we find that our institutional achievements are inadequate to secure for us those liberties and rights which we have previously enjoyed. Apart from this, there is an inherent contradiction in modern capitalism. It seeks to take full advantage of the new powers of production, and yet its working depends upon the distribution of property and income arising from the profit system remaining unchanged. Only so can popular concessions in the shape of social services be made. Yet one of the lessons of post-war economic history has been that increased producing power can only prove profitable if there is a corresponding increase in consuming power. No longer can the achievement of a democratic state be left to the philanthropic and humanitarian motives of industrialists and capitalists. True economic equality, which is the foundation of democracy, can only be obtained by a radical readjustment of the capitalist system.

The increasing importance of the economic factor in democracy gives rise to important considerations in the reform of democratic institutions. Whilst the connection between politics and economics was only incidental, whilst the individual was regarded primarily as a citizen and not as a unit in the economic structure, the existing political franchise was adequate. It can even be maintained that

the interests of industry are sufficiently represented in Parliament to-day. But when economic planning becomes the essential function of the State, when the individual is regarded as an economic unit, as producer or consumer, then some representation of his economic interests is needed. This is behind the suggestions of the Guild Socialists, who would urge the representation of the industrial guilds; but the representation would be largely that of the producer organisations, and these are already heavily enough represented under our present system. Economic democracy must safeguard the interests not only of the technicians who supervise production, but of those who aid production by their labour, and of the consumers upon whom the extent of production must eventually depend. Whilst the control of industry must be admittedly left in the hands of experts, who will therefore be represented, it is unlikely that a system of economic planning would allow for the direct representation of workers as workers. The determination of their rights as to wages, hours, and conditions of labour would have to rest with the economic organ of Government. On the other hand, they would certainly be represented as consumers. Consumers' demands obviously must regulate productive activity; and the present supremacy of producer interests would have to be replaced by the primacy of the consumer. Finally, it is essential that the political organ of government should exercise final control over the economic life of the nation; for upon its adjustment of that economic life, national revenue must depend. The need for the representation of economic interests has been discussed at length in the proposals of Sidney and Beatrice Webb,¹ who suggest two co-ordinate national assemblies, one political, one social and industrial. Apart from the difficulty of distinguishing economic and political spheres of action, it is doubtful whether the existing constituencies

¹ *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*, Longmans.

are most suitable for the election of an economic body; and it seems as if some sort of functional representation is needed. Moreover the co-ordinate powers of the two assemblies would probably give rise to difficulties, for it seems as if one supreme body must control such aspects of government as finance, public order, health and education. Both political and economic representation is needed. If we supplant our political representation by representation on a functional basis, we have no guarantee of the competence of our functional representatives to deal with political matters. If we add functional representation to an existing system, we run the risk of over-emphasising the representation of those economic interests which are already sufficiently powerful.

But democracy depends not only upon the free election of local representatives, but upon the intelligent formation and continuous exercise of public opinion. This raises the whole question of how the popular will can best be expressed. Are we to attempt to represent every facet of opinion in the nation, and so make of our representative assembly a miniature of the nation, ill fitted to the party system? Or are we to assume that the majority must rule, in which case the exaggeration of the will of the majority which our existing system gives us has some justification? Here again we are faced with a choice between complete representation and efficient government; for it hardly seems as if we can combine both within the structure of the party system. We may not agree with Lincoln that "self government is better than good government"; but the danger of modern dictatorships is that whilst they have in practice abrogated the representative principle, they afford no guarantee that they are expert in the art of government. The real safeguard for a system which is only partially representative must lie in the power of public opinion. For that public opinion to be effective, it must be educated. We have seen that the personnel of the Cabinet, of the

legislature, of the public services, and of the judiciary, is often, by reason of its environment and education, out of sympathy with the popular mind. As long as our conception of education is confined to the essentials, to the minimum which we consider necessary for the clerk or the labourer, this must be so. To teach people merely to read is to make them more susceptible to the influence of the printed word, and to encourage in them a mental torpor, the most significant symptom of which is the general public apathy at elections. The facilities for higher education which exist to-day affect only a minority of the population; moreover the content of that education, either an academic culture or a training in the applied sciences, is not the best suited for the production of active citizens. Intelligent criticism of our institutions must admittedly come from minorities; and it must be the minorities in each social class which must act as a corrective to the propaganda so easily exercised upon the majority. Only so can we really achieve the political supremacy of the electorate; for what is most essential in a democracy is to see that the popular will is the real source of power. Representation of the uninformed masses is merely the semblance of democracy; only with a more intelligent appreciation of our political duties and our economic functions can we attain to that democracy whose magic lies in the enlargement of human personality.

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PART III

THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER XX

THE PRESS

It has been well said that "The Press is the central problem of modern democracy". For the main support of democratic government must be enlightened public opinion; and without the freedom to acquire knowledge, to discuss and to criticise, there can be no public opinion. For that opinion to be reliable, the news upon which it is based must also be reliable; and indeed the gathering and dissemination of news is to be regarded as a public trust, as the performance of a public service. The withholding or the misrepresentation of news thus becomes a betrayal of the public, all the more serious when we reflect that the daily paper is the principal reading matter of the people. It thus becomes of vital importance to enquire whether the Press is free to present its news, or whether it is subjected to restrictions.

We may learn something from a brief survey of the evolution of the newspaper. News is as old as history, but journalism is a modern phenomenon. Long before the advent of the printing press royal news letters were sent from London to the country; and when individuals encroached upon this royal prerogative, proclamations were issued against this piracy. Yet the writers of news letters flourished, and James I, towards the end of his reign, allowed foreign news to be printed. The news letters were superseded by printed pamphlets called "news books", which multiplied rapidly in the reign of Charles I. The first real newspaper was born of the struggle between King and Parliament in the seventeenth century; and by

the reign of Charles II newspapers were an established institution. It was Charles II who was responsible for the Licensing Act of 1680, which not only insisted upon the royal assent being necessary for the publication of news, but regarded the publication of a newspaper as a breach of the peace. With the repeal of this act in 1695 many more newspapers came into being, and journalism flourished under Anne. Yet throughout the eighteenth century the government made many attempts to muzzle the Press. Walpole characteristically tried bribery; and newspaper proprietors of the period, even John Walter I of *The Times*, regarded the payment of the government subsidy as their right. Editors, too, were always exposed to the hostile nature of judicial interpretation of the law, as the case of John Wilkes and the "North Briton" shows us. Yet the papers which the government sought to muzzle were few, catering for a small educated class. Whilst the majority of the population was illiterate, and whilst both advertisements and newspapers were taxed, large circulations were out of the question. Even in 1789 the circulation of *The Times* was only 4,500, and it was only the genius of Barnes and Delane which brought the figure up to 60,000 in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1853, however, the tax on advertisements was removed; in 1855 the newspaper tax of 4*d.* per copy followed it; and in 1861 the duty of 3*d.* per pound on paper was rescinded. This opened the way for the penny paper, and for a new style of journalism, in which the *Daily Telegraph* was to take the lead.

It was Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) who was the pioneer of the "popular" paper. In 1896, after a successful preliminary venture with the *Evening News* he launched the *Daily Mail* at a halfpenny, and started a revolution in journalism by attempting "to establish an arithmetical relationship between the sales of a newspaper and its advertisement charges".¹ With

¹ Wickham Steed: *The Press*, p. 143.

the advent of the cheap and popular Dailies, newspaper proprietorship became a commercial undertaking, and so arose the first great limitation upon the freedom of the Press. Like other commercial enterprises a newspaper must consider first the interests of its shareholders; and, as in other branches of industry, combines and mergers may vitally affect the control of the paper.

Miss Jane Soames, in her monograph on "The English Press" points out that five large groups control between them sixteen London papers; ten London dailies with a total circulation of over eleven and a half million, and six Sunday papers with a total circulation of nearly nine million. One might contrast with these figures the circulation of the two independent London dailies—*The Times*, with 186,000, and the *Daily Worker* with 58,000. This control by combines has serious effects upon the quality of the English Press. In the first place, the newspaper to-day is merely one of a number of co-ordinated industrial enterprises such as the paper-making industry, which are controlled by men whose interest is primarily a financial one. The ideal of public trusteeship is subordinated to the practical consideration of good dividends. The journalist has come to play only a minor part in the production of a newspaper; and what he writes must be conditioned by the interests of those who control, howbeit indirectly, the paper which he serves. Again, control by combines is inevitably going to lead to the publicising of interested points of view. A proprietor of one paper in the nineteenth century might have impressed his views, provided they were strong views, upon his comparatively small reading public; a group which to-day controls a daily paper, an evening paper, a Sunday paper, and possibly a popular woman's picture paper, has a far wider range.

By far the most serious commercial restriction upon the Press to-day, however, is its dependence upon revenue

from advertisements. It has been estimated that revenue from sales covers approximately 40 per cent of the cost of producing a daily paper; which means that the remaining 60 per cent has to be found from revenue derived from advertisements. Charges for advertisements are based upon circulation figures; hence the drive for increased circulation, and the insistence upon "net sales certificates". Yet net sales figures are but a very approximate guide to the advertising value of a paper, for a copy of *The Times* may be read by many more people than a copy of the *Daily Express*. Moreover the purchasing power of readers may vary widely, and the returns upon advertisements be proportionately higher. Such is the drive for increased circulation that many copies of a paper may be sold for the free insurance benefits which it provides, for the chance of its competition prizes, or some other catch-penny device, such as books below cost price. Thus has the profession of journalism been degraded, in the words of Wickham Steed, to "grocery of the baser sort, the sort that gives something away with a pound of tea".¹

Nor does the evil stop here. So dependent has the modern newspaper become upon its advertisers that it frequently allows them to dictate its policy. Quite obviously as Miss Soames points out, a paper which widely advertises house property is not likely to attack excessive rents, or the system of land tenure. Nor is a newspaper, itself a money-making concern, likely to enquire too searchingly into the affairs of other money-making concerns which advertise their balance sheets in that paper. There seems to be definite evidence that large advertising concerns can, in the interests of "good business", induce papers to minimise the seriousness of any situation which might adversely affect trade, and to paint a false picture of prosperity.

There remains to be discussed the legal limitations upon

¹ *The Press*, p. 155.

the freedom of the Press. No English law affirms the freedom of the Press, although some curtail it. One of the main grievances of the Press is that, under the existing law, editors have little expectation of getting impartial justice if they are prosecuted for libel. In fact, only about 20 per cent of libel cases reach the court, such is the hostile nature of judicial interpretation, and of juries who think that wealthy newspapers are fair game. Some less reputable lawyers make a good living by seeking out cases where the paper concerned will pay handsome compensation rather than risk the result of a trial. For if the case does go into court, the result is most uncertain. A libel is defined as "a defamatory statement concerning any person which exposes him to hatred, contempt, or ridicule; which causes him to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injure him in his office, profession, or trade". Various pleas may be made in defence of such a charge. It may be argued that the occasion was "privileged"; but the decision as to the validity of this rests with the judge, and no "privileges" are absolute. If it is maintained that the statement is true, it has also to be proved that it was in the public interest that the facts should be made known. Moreover the whole of the statement has to be proved to be true, "including any implied or secondary meaning that the Judge rules the words are capable of bearing and which the jury decides that they actually bear".¹ Other pleas which may be made include that of fair comment, which is equally difficult to substantiate. The law of libel is therefore in urgent need of revision; and in fact the Lord Chancellor has lately appointed a Commission to consider the matter. As things are, since under a libel action not only the author, but the printer, publisher and editor are equally liable, newspapers exercise excessive caution; and many employ lawyers whose task it is to avoid the pitfalls of the law of

¹ D. N. Pritt, *Political Quarterly*, April, 1935.

libel, and by technicalities of expression circumvent the legal censorship of the Press.

There are a number of other legal restrictions which must be examined. The laws against blasphemous and obscene libels are in the main desirable; but the law relating to contempt of court, insofar as it shelters the judge from fair comment on his competence or impartiality, represents a considerable encroachment upon the liberty of the press. Moreover the laws against seditious libel, especially since the passing of the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934, are capable of dangerously wide interpretation. The Official Secrets Act of 1920, declared at the time to be aimed mainly at cases of espionage, has since been extended by judicial interpretation to include cases utterly remote from spying. In its present application there seems to be no distinction between the spreading of information which is confidential, and information which is not; whilst the notorious Clause 6, with its powers of forcible interrogation, has led Mr. Dingle Foot to introduce a bill designed to limit the powers of interrogation.¹

The real significance of the Press lies in fact in its power of selecting news, in its power of emphasis and suppression. And as long as the main interests of the Press are predominantly financial, reform in this direction is unlikely. Perhaps news broadcasts, cheaper and speedier than the Press news service, may provide a corrective; or perhaps the present popularity of news letters will lead to a deflation of newspaper finance, and to a news service independent of advertisers. Exposed to healthy and rigorous competition the Press may be reinvigorated; but the lead must come from the reading public. As long as they are satisfied with what they get, there will be no improvement. As long as they are contented with the cheap sensationalism

¹ A concise account of the Official Secrets Act is given in Kingsley Martin's *Fascism, Democracy and the Press*, New Statesman pamphlet, 1938.

which makes a murder front page news, with a snobbery that is peculiar in that it concentrates on people whose only distinction is the possession of wealth, and with a distorted sense of values that will give a wholly disproportionate amount of space to animal anecdotes and photographs; so long will the popular press deserve the gibe originally hurled at the *Daily Mail*—that it was written by office boys for office boys.

The most urgent need is for intelligent interpretation of current events, such as we have to-day in weeklies like the *New Statesman* and *Spectator*, and occasionally in the more progressive dailies. As a corrective to prejudice there might be introduced a "revue de la presse"—that is, extracts from newspapers representing different points of view—which is now a valuable feature of French journalism. There seems no reason why the Press, freed from legal and financial shackles, should not present its news objectively, nor why its selection of news should not be wise. For if it is the function of the Daily Press to give the public what it wants, it is none the less its duty, as trustee of the public mind, to see that it wants the right things.

CHAPTER XXI

CINEMA

THE keynote of the film to-day is its accessibility. Some fourteen million¹ people visit our cinemas each week, and the potential influence of the film is therefore considerable. To what extent this influence is implicit, and how far it is an instrument of social harm or welfare, are questions to be discussed. By far the strongest factor in this influence is the unconscious and passive reception of mass produced ideas by the cinema audience. For the cinema habit is closely akin to the dope habit; and we visit the cinema for a host of reasons, the least of them being any desire to think. It may be the wish to escape from the monotony of our everyday life; the wish to experience vicariously life in a world utterly remote from our own; or it may be sheer lassitude, a sense of loneliness and frustration. It is because we have made a habit of the cinema that we get the films we do; for we have no set and definite purpose in going, and although occasional criticism of the fare provided is made, yet we still go the next week.

This lack of effective and creative criticism is perhaps one of the main faults of the cinema to-day. Nor is it entirely due to the lassitude and indifference of the public, which often lacks the opportunity for making effective criticism. Many of the best films are shown late, if at all, in the provinces and suburbs, where the overwhelming consideration is cheapness. The manager of a cinema controlled by a chain has no initiative permitted him, and must perforce accept what is sent him from head office, without any

¹ Representing about twenty million weekly attendances.

consideration for local preferences. Current film criticism provides little real guide to good films, for it is too much influenced by advertising, and so often degenerates into film gossip. Admittedly the film public needs to learn how to look, just as it needs to learn how to read, or to appreciate good music. But whilst the intelligent minority in music and letters is provided for, until recently only London has provided for the discriminating film-goer. The growth of local film societies, the establishment of the British Film Institute, the appearance of specialist cinemas, showing the best continental films, or presenting revivals of past successes, are all symptoms of a new and intelligent interest in cinema. Even from the average circulating library subscriber the mention of a few of the outstanding novels of the last twenty years will evoke some response; but speak to the same group of "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," "The Last Laugh," "Storm over Asia," or "Le Million," and the result will be invariably negative. For the film, to a much greater extent even than the press and the book, has become an industry; and the supreme test of a film's merit has become the box-office receipts. The assumption is that the choice of the multitude must necessarily be good, and that minority tastes demand the scantest courtesy. The truth is that the public may be uneducated in the film, that it may lack the ability to appreciate the film intelligently; but little effort has been made to enable it to learn, whilst its freedom of choice is only the more limited by the increase in the number of cinema chains.

Like literature and the drama, the film is required to provide in the realm of imagination some compensation for the deficiencies of real life. Its object is to allow us to enter another world, and it performs that function admirably. The camera possesses immense descriptive power; it has made the countryman aware of the amenities of the big city, it has enabled the country girl to appreciate the niceties of social etiquette in high society. It has, to a far

greater extent than any other cultural instrument, given us a knowledge of the outside world. Yet it has done little more than this, in spite of its unbounded possibilities. The world which it shows us, the other life which it puts before us, is entirely divorced from the realities of existence. It is a life of expensive hotels, of spectacular cabarets, of glamorous women, of almost heroic gangsters. The emotional responses which it evokes are cheap and superficial. And as long as the ultimate appeal must be to the masses, as long as the aim must be to find the lowest common denominator of human desires, then this must be so. Its interpretation of life is of the most elementary; it teaches a worship of success, which it regards as the inevitable reward of virtue. It tells emotionally effective lies, in which the best man always wins and highmindedness is the most obvious human characteristic. This sugar-coated pill is swallowed easily, for it needs no digestion. For the cinema discourages hard thinking and originality, and caters for the philistine and the moron.

Yet the possibilities of cinema are immense. It is above all a creative instrument. It is free to move in space and time, and has none of the restrictions of the living theatre. It could, if it wished, draw its material from real life; and in a few cases it has done so with considerable success. Even the story film could show the worker as a vital factor in modern civilisation, as the Russian documentary has done. Soviet film producers, realising that the raw material of cinema is the film strip itself, set out to devise new methods of composing that material. They deprecated the artificiality of the average set, and used everyday material and themes as a basis on which to build. Germany—at least before the advent of Hitler—exploited the possibilities of the camera and its movements to the full, whilst Hollywood has produced mechanical brilliance and spectacular display, and has concentrated upon the exploitation of the more common human emotions.

The films which we see to-day are predominantly American, in inspiration if not in actual production. They cling to the accepted standards of the story film, with orthodox professional acting and the usual studio routine. Even when they give us films of the working classes, films with a social bias such as the recent spate of pictures dealing with juvenile delinquency, they present a false interpretation, and show us only the brighter side of the question. American films are in fact the most powerful propaganda for everything American; they have publicised and extolled American womanhood, the American fighting services, the American social scene. There is, too, some truth in the charge that British films are largely imitative; that we import American directors, stars and writers, and that we follow too easily the lead that America has given us in the exploitation of the emotions.

Any attempt to discuss the reasons for the decline of British films must give due weight to both the technical and the economic factors involved. In the first place the screen is starved of original authorship, for the revival of both stage and screen must depend ultimately upon an outcrop of creative writing. The creations of first-class minds, when put upon the screen, are too often left to be translated by men of second rate ability. The noticeable slowness of action in British films is due largely to bad writing, and especially to faulty continuity. It is as well that we should reconcile ourselves to the fact that America can probably produce stories of violence and sex much more expertly than we can ever hope to do; and our only hope is in the exploitation of a new market. Yet a few of our big films, pictures like "Pygmalion" and "The Citadel," have done extremely well both here and in America; whilst at the same time half the British film technicians are unemployed. The Americans not only possess the pictures, but they control the most effective machinery

in this country for distributing them. The Quota Act of 1927 forced American distributors here to acquire one British picture for every five American, and the result was the wholesale production of "quota quickies" which have brought the British film industry into such disrepute. In 1938 the quota was fixed on the basis of labour costs involved, and a film on which £37,500 had been spent in labour counted as three films for quota purposes. The American distributing agencies consequently acquired our better films, which would assure them of good box-office returns; and the smaller picture was not wanted. English producers have tended to produce high-priced British films in an attempt to meet America on equal terms; and have costed them so highly that an adequate return from the home market was out of the question. Our slowness of production and our tardiness of release have meant that considerably more capital has to be invested in a film in this country, and the returns are correspondingly small. Reform of this economic impasse should be along two lines. First to reduce the minimum labour costs requirements for quota from £7,500 to about £3,000, and so encourage the Americans to acquire smaller pictures. And secondly, the establishment of a Credits Board which will provide capital for the acquisition of British pictures and the establishment of a sales organisation which will rival the American. But above all we must appreciate the extent of the market at which we are aiming, and limit our expenditure accordingly.

Something must be said of propaganda in films. The most obviously propagandist films are those Soviet productions which aimed at showing the world the achievements of the new Russia. Many of them were excellent films, and it is unfortunate that their propagandist bias has restricted their distribution to a few specialist cinemas. Much more harmful, however, because less explicit, is the element of propaganda in the everyday film. We

have already noticed the publicising of America in American films; and we might note the conservative tendencies of producers and directors, which makes them fight shy of the contentious and the tendentious. The censorship itself, representing as it does not an impartial body, but the cinema industry, exercises a form of propaganda not always desirable. News reels present us with all the inessential news of the week—state visits, inspections, football matches and the like—and ignore the essential and vital news. Some attempt has been made in "The March of Time" to present us with economic realities; but even when these excellent productions slip through the Censor's office, their distribution is still too restricted. The film can give a vividness which no journalist can ever hope to impart; and yet as long as it concentrates on the trivial, it is failing in one of its most specific duties.

Some of the most useful and least contentious of the work which the film can do is in the realm of education. Yet England is notoriously backward in the development of the educational film. Not more than 1,100 schools possess projectors to-day; and these vary considerably both in size and type. Many companies produce excellent educational films, only to find that they can barely cover the cost of production. Some local education authorities have conducted experiments on the use of the film in school; but their experiments are too isolated and on too small a scale for any national progress to be made. There does not exist any central authority to authorise the wholesale purchase of projectors for all schools, for the Board of Education contents itself with suggestions; and consequently a large number of independent bodies—local authorities and directors of education—have all to be converted to the use of the film. The technique of the film in school is admittedly in an experimental stage; yet no progress on a local scale is likely to be of much avail.

Yet the outlook for cinema is not entirely a depressing one. In the early days it was an entertainment in itself just to see moving pictures, and producers seem to have worked upon this assumption for some time. Gradually the audience is demanding more of its films; the intelligent and educated minority is growing; the number of specialist and "repertory" cinemas is increasing. The film-goer is beginning to pay more attention to the director and the film editor than to the star; and even Hollywood is beginning to question what has been so aptly described as "the aphrodisiacal value of the star system". Film societies to encourage the intelligent appreciation of cinema are springing up all over the country; the co-ordinating and pioneer work of the British Film Institute is bearing fruit. The time may not be so far off when the cinema will be recognised as a cultural instrument comparable with literature and the drama.

CHAPTER XXII

THEATRE

THE theatre to-day, unlike the cinema, is a snob institution. On the part of the majority of the people, there is no general inclination to visit the theatre; and whilst there exists a minority of critical playgoers who choose their entertainment with discrimination, most of those who occupy the stalls are intent not so much to see as to be seen. For theatre going is largely a social function, a pleasing sequel to a good dinner. Since the war a new type of audience has arisen, a moneyed middle class with few pretensions to culture, which has replaced the cultivated generation of theatre-goers. Whilst this change may be discernible only in the stalls and the dress circle, it has important effects on the type of play presented. The theatre to-day, being predominantly a commercial concern, must provide for the public taste; and the finances of the theatre are such that the public means the audience in the stalls. For unless these seats are fairly full—or at any rate paid for—then the play may prove a financial failure. Thus we find that the most popular plays are those which make the least demand upon the mind of the audience; and during the post war period there has been a vogue for musical comedies, crime plays, and comedies of middle class life. Some of them have, admittedly, been very good plays; but the theatre cannot survive on the production of the purely transient.

The commercialisation of the theatre is probably to-day its greatest defect; and yet the matter does not rest here. A moderate estimate of the cost of putting on a modern

comedy would be about £4,000; rents are high in proportion to the earnings of the play, although they are not exorbitant when the rise in ground rents in central London is considered. The manager has thus to obtain financial backing before he can take over a theatre; and this backing, although occasionally provided by an individual genuinely interested in the art of the theatre, is more frequently provided by syndicates, whose main interest is in the financial success of the venture. This pandering to popular taste means that prices must be maintained even if the play is only a moderate one; for any reduction in prices will convince the public that the show must be inferior. "Privilege tickets" have succeeded because the 12s. 6d. stall is still 12s. 6d., but an extra stall is provided free by the management; thus privilege ticket holders are content in their snobbery still to sit in 12s. 6d. stalls. A big success can always command a big public willing to pay for that success; but there does not appear to be enough regular and discriminating playgoers to support a moderate success.

Since the post war theatre is so largely influenced by box office considerations, the time has not been favourable for experiment. It is significant that London can boast of few successful experimental ventures since the war, among them Miss Lilian Baylis's work at the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells, Sir Barry Jackson's courageous productions of really good plays, and John Gielgud's repertory season at the Queen's Theatre. One pleasing feature of the post war theatre has been the increasing importance attaching to the play itself. The days of the old actor-managers, when a play was chosen and performed mainly to provide a vehicle for a display of the actor's talent, have gone, and to-day the play's the thing. One would have thought that this would have resulted in better plays and better playwrights; but one of the more surprising features of the last twenty years is the evanescent character of the playwright. Ten years ago the names of Noel Coward, John

Van Druten, Sean O'Casey would have been generally accepted as the playwrights of the future; but Van Druten and O'Casey are almost unknown to the average theatre-goer to-day, whilst Coward has almost abandoned straight plays for musical pieces. So, too, "Gordon Daviot", after her brilliant *Richard of Bordeaux* produced two only moderate successes, and faded out. If the insistence on box office receipts is to be allowed so to discourage our authors as *Sirocco* discouraged Coward, then it is indeed high time that we had a National Theatre. On the other hand James Bridie has continued along original lines, Emlyn Williams, an actor-dramatist, has given us good melodrama, and J. B. Priestley has made a successful venture into the ranks of author-managers. There is also a sign of the revival of the poetic drama, as in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, W. H. Auden's *The Dog beneath the Skin* and Isherwood and Auden's *Ascent of F. 6*, all of them originally performed at experimental theatres. Nor is there any dearth of good acting; in spite of the attraction of Hollywood which proved so irresistible to Leslie Howard, we can still occasionally see John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier and Michael Redgrave on the stage; whilst for actresses we still have Edith Evans, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, and Peggy Ashcroft. Of outstanding production, with the exception of Gielgud's production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the New, and Norman Marshall's work at the Gate Theatre, there is not much; in fact the importance of the producer seems to have declined during the last twenty years, and we have no one to compare with Komisarjevsky. The last decade is theatrically a decade without a personality, without a purpose and without a movement. It is a decade of commercialism, of light after-dinner entertainment, with a few really good performances, and one or two courageous experiments.

The competition of film and theatre is not confined to competition for an audience. Most film actors have learnt

their acting upon the stage; and it is the uncertainty of stage acting, the dearth of good plays and playwrights, in addition to the salaries to be obtained from film acting, which have forced the actor at least to combine stage and screen work, if not to forsake the stage entirely. Thus they arrive at the theatre in the evening tired with a day in the studio, whilst the film producer suffers from the demands which theatrical rehearsals make upon his cast. Whilst the theatre has something to learn from the film in stage setting, and whilst the actor can gain valuable experience for his film from stage acting, there seems little doubt that both film and theatre would benefit from a separation. There seems no reason why there should not be an academy of film art, and such a separation of cast would ensure that those who remained with the theatre were artists by vocation. Or would they be those who failed in films?

It seems, indeed, that if we want to preserve the theatre as a living institution, as something more than a mere anodyne for tired minds, then a National Theatre is essential. The idea was suggested some time before the war, and it was hoped that the theatre would be ready for opening in 1916, the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. The war, and the triviality of the immediate post war years, put the idea into the background, and it was in the nature of a surprise when the purchase of a site was announced in August 1937. Yet the idea is natural enough in itself. The theatres of Athens and Rome were both state theatres, as is the Comédie Française to-day, and the state theatres of Germany and Russia. We have museums to preserve the records of the nation, libraries to preserve our literature; surely it is not too much to ask for a theatre to preserve our drama from the dry rot of commercialism. For the national theatre must be the possession of the people, providing good plays at low prices, and presenting a play solely on its merits. This implies endowment of some kind,

and it is here that opposition arises. For to the average man it seems more reasonable to endow a museum or a library, which can preserve the more tangible heritage of our country, than to endow a theatre to provide plays which can often be seen in a commercial theatre. Yet the ordinary theatre to-day gives no guarantee of security or permanence; and whilst a few repertory theatres provide on a less ambitious scale what we would expect from a national theatre, their repertoire is restricted and they are almost as subject to box office considerations as the ordinary commercial theatre. A national repertory theatre would preserve those plays which appealed only to an educated minority, and so were dubbed failures; and it would render possible the revival of the great successes, now so rarely seen in the West End. It would restore the theatre to the position which it held in the time of the old actor-managers, when a play was approached primarily from the point of view of art; and yet no one artist would be able to subordinate the play to his personality. Whilst it would not be open to the reproach of being a theatre of the avant-garde, it would watch for, and sometimes encourage, new tendencies and ideas. The theatre would be saved from the inroads of cinema, radio and television; the actor would be assured of a reasonably long engagement and of an added dignity of status. The theatre would finally assume its true position as one of the most important cultural instruments of our age.

Something should be said of the repertory theatres, of which there are a considerable number throughout the country. Originally, the name repertory was almost invariably associated with failure, but the success achieved by the Birmingham and Liverpool repertory theatres put new life into the movement. Many towns are entirely dependent for their theatrical entertainment on their repertory theatres, and London is fortunate in having such ventures as the Old Vic, the Westminster and the Embassy. Yet

most repertories to-day can only put on plays which will have a reasonably good public, and there is an increasing tendency to put a play on for a short run of two or three weeks. Their repertoire compares unfavourably with that of similar theatres abroad, and often they are obliged, for financial reasons, to confine themselves to the more spectacular successes. Yet repertory theatres are noted as a training school for actors; the fairly frequent change of part has a stimulating effect upon the cast, for nothing can be more depressing than a long run. If the extent of the repertoire could be increased, if the plays were changed and revived more frequently, whilst the repertoire itself was constantly being enlarged, then the repertory movement would be one of the most vital and progressive movements in the theatre to-day.

The amateur movement is more extensive if less effective. There is hardly a village or a town which to-day does not boast its amateur dramatic society; and the amateur stage has a strong attraction for a very mixed bag of adherents, who find in amateur dramatics an innocuous outlet for exhibitionism and a relief from the monotony of life. Over five million people a year pay to see amateur performances, although the average society produces only two shows a year. In some towns the movement has become so strong that a Little Theatre has sprung up, and such houses as the Bradford Civic Playhouse, the Garrick at Altrincham, and the Little Theatres at Dundee and Southport have achieved almost a national reputation. Whilst the standard of acting varies, and is often very low, amateur societies have performed a useful function in keeping alive the one act play, threatened with extinction when the curtain raiser went out of fashion. Activities are encouraged by festivals, and particularly by the schools organised by the British Drama League and the Scottish Community Drama Association. During the last few years a number of propagandist theatre groups have

grown up, particularly the Left Theatre group, who in London have their own theatre, Unity. Here, whilst they play mainly to the converted, the standard of acting is often very high.

From the time of Elizabeth the English theatre has always been a popular theatre. Thus to say that the theatre fails because, commercialised, it panders to popular taste is to criticise that taste. The modern audience seems content with the fare which it receives largely because it represents a public which is not susceptible to the appeal of drama. In France and in America experiment has been welcomed, and audiences have called forth the best in playwrights; and the hope for the English theatre must lie in a popular response to good plays. The cold truth is that to millions of us the theatre means nothing; to a few wealthy thousands it means social entertainment; to a small minority it represents a living cultural force which must be preserved. That there exists a popular demand for drama can be seen any night in a pit queue; for drama is not only in the theatre, but in the life of the community. The need is to meet that demand, rather than the demand of the philistines, and to give the theatre once more a vital role in the life of the community.

CHAPTER XXIII

RADIO

ON the assumption that there are four listeners to every wireless licence taken out, it would appear that there are now approximately thirty six million listeners. The social effect of broadcasting must, then, be considerable. The vital question is obviously whether that effect is beneficial; and since of our thirty-six millions a considerable proportion are "tap listeners", it is impossible to make any statistical assessment. Those who use their sets so indiscriminately, however, whilst numerically they may be a majority, are culturally negligible. Not only do they fail to realise the cultural potentialities of broadcasting, but they would probably be most indignant at the suggestion that broadcasting should provide them with anything more than the lightest of entertainment. One thing is certain—that serious reading and serious thought, already declining through the influence of the cheap film and the cheap press, cannot hope to survive in homes where the background is provided by the continuous and indiscriminate blare of a loud speaker.

It is a commonplace that broadcasting is one of the most powerful agencies for standardisation in the history of the world; that it may tend to destroy the critical faculty and to encourage stereotyped standards in art and letters. It has been at once heralded as the greatest educational force in the modern world, and condemned as encouraging intellectual passiveness. The truth obviously lies somewhere between the two extremes; and much must depend upon the future policy of the B.B.C.

Some of the more extravagant claims have been made for the educational value of broadcasting; and there is no doubt that, in spite of the force of earlier criticisms, talks and lectures are becoming increasingly popular. This is due partly to the fact that talks programmes are suited to our national temperament, and partly to the improved technique of the broadcasters themselves. The Englishman lacks—or is afraid of showing—the urge for self-improvement which is a characteristic of the American; and, if we must improve our minds, we prefer to do so by our own fireside, where we are relieved both of the effort of attending a lecture and of the self-conscious sense of embarrassment which a public attendance would involve. Again, considerable progress has been made with the talks programmes; they are now carefully planned in advance, pamphlet guides and bibliographies are issued, and speakers are chosen with care. On the other hand, it is a debatable point whether a series of talks, at a fixed hour each week, is the best procedure; or whether individual talks, on topics of burning importance, would not be just as valuable, and even more popular.

Broadcasts to schools have proved so successful that by the end of 1938, over 8,000 British schools were equipped with sets. But here again a note of warning must be sounded; schools broadcasts are only an addition. Their function, however valuable, can never be more than to supplement the work of the teacher, to enliven the dry bones of facts with touches of life and actuality. It is in the correlation of the academic and the real that transmissions to schools have their essential value. One critic¹ would urge that the B.B.C. has indeed only touched the fringe of the subject. He suggests an education station on its own wavelength, broadcasting not only during the normal school hours, but to adolescent groups in the evenings. An academic headquarters staff would be

¹ J. Howard Whitehouse, *Broadcasting and Education*, O.U.P., 1936.

responsible for the programmes, which would be publicised and expanded in a weekly paper for educational broadcasting. Finally, he would suggest special news broadcasts for schools, with explanatory and objective comment, given early in the day as an encouraging guide to the reading of the newspapers.

As a patron of the arts, too, the B.B.C. can exert a powerful influence. With the levelling of incomes the number of intelligent art patrons has considerably decreased; but democratic education is multiplying both the number and the influence of amateurs who are interested in music, drama, and literature. At a time when the Press encourages public interest in the personalities and private lives of artists rather than in their work, broadcasting is performing a valuable duty in educating public taste.

In no sphere is this more noteworthy than in music. Before the war good permanent orchestras existed, with few exceptions, only in the capitals of the countries of Western Europe, and in the more important cities. Germany, Austria and Italy were more fortunately placed as countries with a strong musical tradition. In England the middle class fetish for piano playing and drawing room singing was due more to social snobbery than to a liking for good music. The mass of the people, in short, were musically starved. Now music occupies more programme space than any other broadcast activity in every country except Russia; and listeners have a daily choice of concerts by first class orchestras. Considerable criticism has, however, been aroused by this predominance of music in broadcast programmes: it has been urged that amateur music has declined, that grave hardships have been inflicted upon individual artists, and that the concert industry has been hard hit. It has been pointed out that the technical difficulties involved in relaying an orchestral performance mean that the listener hears not the music

as it is originally played, but a compressed and distorted version; and it is certainly true that the range, tone and volume of the symphony orchestra have to be compressed in order to bring them within the range of the microphone.

But much can still be said for the B.B.C. services to music. There is no doubt that the public is much better informed musically, whilst broadcast music is good advertising for the musical profession, is creating a demand for gramophone records, and sending a new public to the concert halls. Transmission, in fact, shortens the life of shallow music, with its sole appeal of the catchy tune; and it cannot harm great music, whose appeal grows the more it is heard. The B.B.C. now finances permanent orchestras of picked players, who themselves personally attend all rehearsals in contrast to the old system when deputies were too frequently employed. Opera is subsidised from broadcasting revenue in return for broadcasting rights; and there has been an immense increase in corporate musical activity among amateur orchestras and choirs. The quality of the transmission of orchestral performances should improve, since television experts have discovered the excellent reproduction obtainable on ultra short waves.

Music also plays its part in another activity of broadcasting—the radio drama. The production of a radio play demands a technique of its own, for there is no scenery, no drop scenes, no background or artificial setting, to aid the producer. A much larger tax is made upon the imagination of the audience, who, for thorough appreciation, must have a well-developed dramatic sense and a capacity for intelligent co-operation with the author. Music in a radio play can often aid both the producer and audience by suggesting such a background or change of scene. This is the more important when we realise that the radio play is not bound by the dramatic unities, that its action is continuous, and that the scene can change

as often as the author likes. There is, indeed, a promising future ahead of broadcast drama. It is to be hoped that it will restore the human voice to its old pre-eminence on the stage, and direct the attention of the public to the character and intellect of the actor rather than to his appearance. The dramatised version of current events, and the general extension of outside broadcasts, bids fair to be the most popular entertainment which the radio can provide.

I have suggested that the human voice may assume its old supremacy as a result of broadcast drama; and since broadcasting is the "speaking press" of the world, its influence upon the spoken word cannot be ignored. Whilst there is an admitted need for standardisation at a time when the state of spoken English is so chaotic, we must proceed cautiously. Complete uniformity of speech has provoked, and always will provoke, criticism; and it is obviously desirable to preserve the rich vocabulary of literature and local idiom. It is, however, just as essential to avoid slovenliness, temporary mannerisms and affectations, distorted vowels and blurred consonants. The difficulty of any standardisation is to find the standard; and whilst many criticisms have been levelled at "Announcers' English," it seems that the B.B.C. has adopted the only possible compromise. For national broadcasts some uniformity is essential: but for programmes which are intended only for a particular region there seems no objection to the local dialect.

Nor need the claims of the regions be limited to speech. At the moment the main structure of regional programmes is dictated from London; and the gaps are carefully filled by the regional directors. Very little attempt is made to foster native talent, and no effort is made to cater for local appetites in music, art, or literature. The exchange of provincial and London staffs shows promise of some reform in this direction; but much can still be done to arrest

the stereotyping process of mass-produced criticism by encouraging regional criticism of current events, the arts, and literature, and by realising that, just as everything from London need not always be good, so everything from the provinces need not always be second rate.

The development of regionalism might have beneficial effects upon the control of the B.B.C. At the moment the main problems of policy are concerned with the mystery which surrounds the finance of the B.B.C., and the danger of its becoming an instrument of government propaganda. The public should certainly have more information about the £3,800,000 revenue, and the Government's access to B.B.C. funds should be made clear. The heavy cost of empire transmissions—to which neither the dominions or the colonies contribute,—and the probability that television will mean expensive machinery and a complicated system of relay stations, will inevitably add to the cost of broadcasting. Yet the listener already pays enough; and the money might easily be found by releasing the B.B.C. from income tax (in 1938 it was £208,000), by making a special grant for empire services, or even by the introduction of sponsored programmes. The Government has, indeed, now agreed to the allocation of an additional 15 per cent of the licence revenue for extra capital expenditure.

Whilst we are more fortunately situated than Germany or Italy in our broadcasting system, the total microphone publicity for the Government is considerable: and the Government has the power to stop any broadcast without stating a reason. In an emergency the Cabinet would almost certainly seize control of the B.B.C., and in these days emergencies may become chronic. The American listener, in fact, argues that the commercial system of broadcasting, with sponsored programmes, makes not only for better entertainment, but for freer citizenship: and he regards the European systems as examples of the

tyranny of officialdom and bureaucracy. Sponsored programmes would probably improve certain features through competition, and they would keep advertisers' capital in England; whilst they need not descend to the crudity of certain continental broadcasts. But the hope for the maintenance of a free broadcasting system must eventually rest with the vital criticism of the listening public; and that depends upon the ability of broadcasting to inculcate a critical awareness rather than a passive stagnation.

What of the future? Who can say that within the next few years television may become cheap and so popular? If and when it does, the home life of the nation will have an added attraction. There will be almost unlimited possibilities in what we may call the radiogenic art forms—radio drama, feature programmes and recorded events. Theatres, cinemas and possibly even the press, will feel the competition of this new rival, and the cinema industry is cautiously preparing to introduce cinema television. Yet television will demand from its audience more concentration, and, for some time probably, a darkened room. It is, I think, unlikely, both for this reason and for that of expense, that television programmes will be broadcast continuously. Television may undo much of the good which radio has done; it may destroy the promised pre-eminence of the human voice and fall into all the faults of a commercialised theatre and cinema. But if it can bring a little silence into a world which is over loud, if it can induce listeners to listen and not merely to hear, it will be welcome.

CHAPTER XXIV

BOOKS AND THE PEOPLE¹

IT is, I suppose, only natural that with cheap cinemas, a cheap press, and cheap travel we should eventually have cheap books. Yet it is only within the last twenty years that any considerable number of books has been produced at a price suited even to the pocket of the middle classes. This was due partly to bad distribution, for comparatively few towns had a really good bookshop; partly to the prejudice of the publishers who catered only for a market of the wealthier classes; and perhaps mainly to the peculiar nature of the English educational system. That system, indeed, from the days of Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, has held the virtue of economy in high esteem. The ideal of the governing classes was for many decades a restricted ideal; to provide the minimum of learning necessary to salve the consciences of philanthropic and religious institutions. Books, therefore, had to be few and had to be cheap, if they were intended for the masses. And although we had cheap reprints of the classics, the possession of books which we might display upon our shelves was a privilege reserved for the well-to-do.

If book ownership was thus a class privilege, so until the middle of the nineteenth century was the facility for borrowing. Lending libraries and book clubs for the wealthy had existed since the eighteenth century; not until 1850 were rate-aided libraries made possible. This

¹ Both for my title and for much of the contents of this chapter I am indebted to Mrs. Margaret Cole's excellent pamphlet, *Books and the People*, Hogarth Press, 1938.

act, however, was only permissive, and expenditure was restricted to the product of a halfpenny rate. This was increased in 1892 to a penny rate, but the restriction was not removed until 1919, although a few of the more enlightened boroughs obtained special acts empowering them to spend more. Even to-day public library services vary considerably from area to area; and borough librarians will admit that financial restrictions make the supply of books quite inadequate. In the twenties of this century a number of cheap "no deposit" libraries sprang up, and catered for the tastes of a public who liked modern works of fiction, travel or biography—an extension to the masses (who could not afford a subscription or even a nominal deposit) of the privileges enjoyed for some years by members of Mudie's, W. H. Smith's, or Boots' libraries. Yet to-day few of these cheaper libraries can continue to survive except as an adjunct to some other form of business—newsagents, stationers, tobacconists and the like.

Early in the nineteenth century, too, publishers began to explore the market for cheap reprints. J. M. Dent set the fashion in his "Everyman Library"; Messrs. Nelson reprinted popular novels at 7*d.*; whilst the Home University Library provided new serious works for a modest shilling. This progress was checked by the war, with its consequent increase in the cost of book production. Although since the war costs have remained high, and indeed recently tended to rise, a number of experiments in the production of cheap books should be noted. The Nonesuch Press has shown that really fine print and fine binding can be produced for less than half a guinea; Mr. Victor Gollancz has produced serious works of considerable length for five or six shillings. Pocket reprints of the classics have rescued a few titles from oblivion; newspapers have produced monstrosities of cheapness which they called books; and it is to-day possible to furnish even your library by extended credit facilities. Finally, in 1935 came the

Penguins and two years later the Pelicans, with which Mr. Allen Lane dumbfounded all his critics by proving that he could sell 100,000 copies of a sixpenny reprint, and make a profitable business of it.

We must notice also various attempts to increase book sales. In spite of the original opposition of booksellers, book tokens have become increasingly popular. The Book Society, founded in 1929, continues to supply between eight and nine thousand members with a novel a month at the conventional price of seven and sixpence. In 1935 Mr. Victor Gollancz started the Left Book Club, which now offers at half a crown to over fifty thousand members a selected book of left wing political views, a monthly review, and numerous additional choices at considerable reductions on the normal published prices. Various other book clubs have sprung up—the Right Book Club, the Book Club, the Religious Book Club, and, the most recent arrival, the Liberal Book Club. The total membership of these imitative book clubs probably exceeds that of the Left Book Club by about fifty per cent; but Messrs. Foyle, who control most of them, do not maintain membership by forming groups or study circles, as the Left Book Club. Membership of this club is indeed an act of political faith, and this may lead to over-enthusiastic recruiting on the part of members. On the other hand it may tend to keep the membership relatively stable, in spite of the gross inequality of choices.

What, then, is the effect of these book clubs upon the public? The non-political clubs such as the Book Society, the Book Club, and Readers' Union, claim to make their choices on merit alone. They maintain that, with the thousands of books published each year, the ordinary intelligent reader is bewildered and needs guidance. Admittedly, reviews in daily or Sunday papers, or even in the more serious weeklies, are unreliable; much will depend upon the public for whom the paper caters,

or upon the "news value" of the author. And in any case the reviewers—only too frequently authors themselves—are not always exempt from the charge of interested motives, or even sheer incompetence. Yet the selectors are usually authors, or publishers, or both; and whilst the average member may obtain a little more respectable reading than before, such clubs can in the long run lead only to standardisation. Insofar as Book Clubs lead to more general book buying their influence is to be commended; but where they achieve an undeserved popularity for an over-lengthy work of fiction, or where they present one set of views to the exclusion of all others, their influence cannot but be prejudicial to the true interests of the people. Penguins and their kind, appearing at a price which is within the reach of a much larger section of the public than even the cheaper book clubs, have certainly encouraged the habit of book buying, and probably of book reading. But whether Mr. Lane can maintain his high standard in the selection of titles is a doubtful question; whilst Penguin specials—which quickly reach a sale of 150,000—convey left wing interpretations of their subjects, a form of propaganda which is all the more insidious because it is not labelled.

There can be no doubt that more people are buying books. Apart from many who previously have never been able to afford this luxury, the habit has spread to the better-off working classes, who regard the acquisition of books as a social distinction. The middle classes, too, who could quite well afford to buy books, but distrusted their own judgment, not only subscribe to book clubs, but have formed the book buying habit. It is more than likely that the limit of this new public has not yet been reached. There does not appear to be much evidence that the production of other, more expensive books, has suffered; for they would still be bought by those who needed them, or had acquired the habit of buying dear

books. For, as the recent sales of books like Gunther's "Inside Europe" or Hogben's "Mathematics for the Million" show, it does not necessarily follow that the cheaper book will drive out the dearer one. Whilst it is obviously desirable that readers should choose their own books rather than have them selected for them, we must remember that such hypothetical freedom of choice is limited by both the financial and cultural factors. The poorer classes were neither sufficiently wealthy, nor sufficiently educated, to be able to choose their own books. Provided that the selection is good, their chosen books are better than no books; and it is to be hoped that members of Book Clubs will develop a critical approach to the club choices. The main dangers are that books will be bought merely because they are cheap, and that political book clubs will adopt conformity to their own political ideas as the sole test of the suitability of a book. Yet the experiment is a comparatively new one: and insofar as it may tend to make the public more literate and more aware, it is an experiment worth trying.

CHAPTER XXV

EDUCATION

IN medieval times education was a monopoly of the church, and the "song schools" of Chaucer's time were the ancestors of our elementary schools. Even the old grammar schools, where a more advanced education was given, were sponsored by the Church; while some of the grammar schools, like Eton and Winchester, owe their present designation as public schools to the fact that they were originally open to poor scholars from all over the country. Technical education was provided by schools attached to the gilds, and there still survive a number of public and secondary schools which owe their foundation to such companies as the Grocers or the Haberdashers. At the universities the main subject of study was theology, with law a good second. This clerical control was gradually broken down by the rise of the middle class, and one of the most marked features of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the secularisation of education.

The growth of population which came with the Industrial Revolution resulted in the development of the Charity School and Sunday School movement; and early in the nineteenth century, following upon the work of Lancaster and Bell, there came a network of voluntary elementary schools, organised by the British and Foreign School Society for Nonconformists, and by the National Society for Anglicans. The pioneer work of Bell and Lancaster, educationally retrogressive as it was, proved essential in face of the indifference of the state, whose

generosity amounted to a grant of £20,000 in 1833, which was increased to £30,000 and made annual six years later. The religious difficulties involved in state education seem to have retarded progress considerably in the middle of the century; but the extension of the franchise in 1867 and the example set by other countries, notably Prussia, produced Forster's Education Act of 1870. Where voluntary schools maintained by religious bodies were inadequate, school boards were to be established under this Act, and were to levy a threepenny rate for elementary education; in short, the Church still retained a considerable control. In 1880 attendance was made compulsory, and in 1891 free. The leaving age was fixed at eleven in 1895, and fourteen in 1900, although exemptions below that age were allowed.

The systematic development of secondary and technical education dates only from the Education Act of 1902, which empowered County and County Borough authorities to provide secondary education. Already provision had been made, by the penny rate of 1889 and the diversion of "whisky money" in 1890, for some technical education; whilst a large number of students were attending evening classes before the turn of the century. In 1918 the Fisher Education Act empowered authorities to establish nursery schools, abolished exemptions below fourteen, and proposed a system of day continuation schools up to the age of eighteen. The first and third of these provisions have never become really effective, in face of the increasing economy in the social services; whilst, as we shall see, the Act of 1936 with its provisions for school leaving age has further complicated the question.

There are to-day about five and a half million children attending elementary schools. Although half the school buildings are provided by religious bodies, more than two thirds of the children are educated in schools maintained by local authorities. About 300,000 children

go to private primary schools, many of which are good, some bad, and the majority seriously inefficient. Half a million children attend the 15,000 secondary and technical schools, and about 150,000 attend public schools and private secondary schools.

State education is to-day controlled by Local Authorities and the Board of Education. The Act of 1902 transferred the powers of the School Boards to the Education Committees of local authorities. County Councils and County Borough Councils, known as Part II authorities, may provide secondary and other higher education, and must provide elementary education, except where a Part III authority exists. Part III authorities (the name is taken from their place in the act which created them) consist of some municipal boroughs with over 10,000 population, and some rural or urban districts with over 20,000 population. The 1902 Act also insisted that local authorities should help voluntary schools with rates, but the Churches still provided the school buildings. The Board of Education, in theory a committee of the Cabinet, is in practice a department of the administration, with a President, or Minister of Education, and a Parliamentary Secretary. It administers grants to local education authorities, supervises state schools through His Majesty's Inspectorate, and controls policy through the issue of periodic circulars.

This joint control also applies to finance. In higher education, the state and the local education authorities each pay 50 per cent of the cost; and the same principle worked in practice for elementary education until 1931. Since then the State pays a complicated amount¹ which is often less than the 50 per cent minimum. This takes insufficient account of the fact that in the poorer areas, and especially in the depressed areas, the yield of a rate is extremely low, whilst the child population is often very

¹ It is computed as follows:—50% of teachers' salaries etc.; 20% of other items; a grant of 45s. a pupil, less the product of a sevenpenny rate.

high. Between 1925 and 1935 the share of the local education authorities in elementary educational expenditure has increased by 6.5 per cent, whilst the decrease in the cost of higher education is almost negligible. All schemes of development suggested by local education authorities have to be approved by the Board, since it controls so vital a part of the finances; and although the Board is now urging a progressive policy, it has made no move to restore the old system of grants.

Circular 1444 of the Board of Education invited local authorities to submit proposals to extend facilities for nursery education. There are to-day 92 recognised nursery schools in England and Wales, catering for 0.35 per cent of the children in the nursery age group. The Board, in the interests of economy, prefers to advocate nursery classes; and is apparently prepared to overlook the fact that a nursery class in an elementary school building will have to adapt itself to the organisation of an elementary school, often totally unsuitable for children below the age of five. The real need is for a large scale policy of rebuilding, housing children aged five to seven in nursery-infant schools. Whilst the reports of the Consultative Committee of the Board constantly urge the separation of infants' and junior departments, the policy of the Board has been to amalgamate the two departments; and less than half the children in the age group eight to eleven have been reorganised in junior departments.

At the age of eleven an elementary school child sits for an examination, according to the result of which he will go either to a secondary school, a central or senior school, or remain in a senior department of his existing school. Those who remain take another examination at the age of thirteen; and the successful candidates are eligible to proceed to a Junior Technical School. The Hadow Report of 1926 suggested a unified system of post-primary education, under which all children over eleven

should go to a type of secondary school—academic secondary, practical modern, or technical schools—most suited to their abilities. Yet to-day 39 per cent of the children over eleven are still in senior departments of elementary schools. The outcry against this lack of reorganisation was one of the reasons for raising the school leaving age to fifteen in the Act of 1936. Yet, with the existing system of exemptions, the school population aged fourteen to fifteen will be a shifting one; and since the best pupils will obtain posts and so be exempted, it will be one of second rate quality. Yet it is proposed to establish a scheme of secondary education upon such unreliable foundations. Nor can we overlook the grave social injustice of raising the school leaving age without paying maintenance grants; and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the predominant motive is to maintain a supply of cheap juvenile labour.

There are two types of state secondary schools; those entirely maintained by the state and the local authorities, and those which are merely helped by a grant. All "grant-aided" schools charge fees; but "special places" may be obtained as a result of an entrance examination. According to the means of parents of special place winners, fees are partially or wholly remitted, and, in exceptional cases, a maintenance grant may be made. The number of special places varies from 25 per cent to 100 per cent of the vacancies available, according to the local authority; and places not filled by special place winners are filled by fee-paying pupils. In spite of the acknowledged success of the old scholarship and freeplace system, the tendency since the issue of Circular 1421 in 1932 has been to insist upon a fairly rigid means test, to raise fees, and to reduce the size of classes not by subdividing them but by regulating admissions to secondary schools. Professor Tawney aptly described the object of the circular as being to "establish inequality of educational opportunity as a principle of public policy".

Even our system of technical education is seriously deficient. Less than thirty thousand pupils attend our 220 junior technical schools, and under the method of recruitment described above, only second rate intelligence is available for industry. It is extremely difficult for students from technical schools to proceed to a university, since the academic training for university entrance is usually provided only in secondary schools. There are also serious deficiencies in equipment. The Government has however begun a £12,000,000 programme of development for technical education, which, if prosecuted vigorously, should have beneficial effects. There are indeed some educationists who urge that the Government should appreciate the importance of technical education by a much wider extension of the service. Others regard the future of post-primary education as lying in the development of senior schools, which would be brought up to secondary status. Finally, there are the supporters of the multi-bias school, where children, after a general education from eleven to thirteen, could be classified into academic, technical or commercial streams according to their ability and inclination.

One of the most urgent needs is for the provision of adequate school buildings, for it has been estimated that 80 per cent of them need rebuilding or reconditioning. The Board has reverted to the 50 per cent financial grant for school buildings, but made the grant only for a limited period, in spite of the fact that a long term building programme is needed. This might help to solve the question of the size of classes. In 1937 there were 2,646 classes of over fifty in elementary schools, and 4,606 classes of over thirty in secondary schools. Here the main financial difficulty is that of the salaries of the extra teaching staff which would be needed; but in face of the disquieting unemployment figures in the teaching profession, a reduction in the size of classes would prove not

only educationally sound but economically satisfactory. Vital reforms are also needed in the school health service. A national standard of optimum fitness and development, an increase in the number of school clinics, and school nurses, an expanded service of free milk and meals, are the basis of the good health of the nation.

We have seen the late development and the slow progress made in our educational system. Real education is still regarded largely as a luxury; and whilst obviously not every elementary school pupil is equipped for a university education, there is serious reason for thinking that the material which would most profit from higher education is denied access to that education. Children of fee-paying parents monopolise anything from 50 per cent to 75 per cent of the places in secondary schools; and a very high percentage of such pupils fall below the average level of ability. Only about 10 per cent of elementary school children proceed to secondary schools, and less than 0.4 per cent reach the universities. Even the percentage of admissions to universities from secondary schools has been steadily declining. In spite of scholarships, the facilities provided by the universities are inadequate for the higher education of the intelligent poor, as can be seen when we consider that nearly a million students attend evening classes or adult tutorial classes.

Little space can be devoted to any consideration of the content of education, but the following questions might be raised. There seems little doubt that the bias of higher education is too academic; the business world has adopted the Matriculation examination, originally an academic test of fitness to enter a university, as a general standard of education; and headmasters are still too prone to justify themselves solely on the strength of largely fortuitous examination successes. A re-integration of school subjects, a more realistic treatment of History and Geography, a more humane and less philological approach to languages,

a denial of the hitherto unassailable sovereignty of mathematics—these are the lines along which education of the future will probably move. The more active participation in public affairs which is to-day being demanded of all of us is a strong argument for a re-orientation of subjects which will link them up with the problems of the modern world, and produce reasonable citizens rather than successful examinees.

CHAPTER XXVI

PROPAGANDA

PROPAGANDA is essentially an instrument of authority. Used originally as a means of strengthening Catholicism in face of the Protestant attack in the sixteenth century, it has since become an essential instrument for conditioning the public. It is, as we shall see, extensively used not only by the government, but by the Press, by film and radio authorities, and by a number of voluntary associations. Its main purpose is to persuade people to a course of action which they would not otherwise pursue, or to a point of view which they would not otherwise hold. The propagandist is not concerned so much with the intrinsic truth of what he propagates, as with its credibility. Propaganda must not sound like propaganda, but must appear to be a realistic statement of facts. It thrives upon a public which is only too ready to accept second-hand information and ready-made opinions, and it exists only in virtue of the fact that individual minds are untrained and undisciplined. Its greatest enemy is the faculty of thought; and yet its most powerful weapon is the ability to make people believe that they are being persuaded by an appeal to their reasoning powers. Thus a series of half-formulated ideas, of catchwords and slogans, is to be preferred to clear cut ideas, for it is essential to encourage vagueness of thought. Persuasion must be gentle and subtle; for once let the individual become aware that he is being subjected to propaganda, and a firm resistance will be encountered.

It is admittedly difficult to distinguish or define propaganda. There are those who claim that our whole

system of education is essentially propagandist; and insofar as we glorify the achievements of our country whilst ignoring the means by which they were achieved, there is some justice in their claim. The mere protection of the individual from disturbing (or so-called "subversive") ideas is in itself a form of propaganda. Perhaps Coronation and Jubilee celebrations are propaganda for the monarchy. We may even agree with the Marxist who argues that football matches and greyhound tracks are the modern equivalent of the bread and circuses of ancient Rome, and have as their main purpose the diversion of the public mind from the political and economic evils of the time.

Propaganda is essentially a child of conflict, whether it be a conflict of ideas and beliefs, a competition of economic groups within the nation, or a physical struggle between nations. Just as a Communist will seek to spread his doctrines among his fellows, so will one producer try to promote the consumption of his goods at the expense of another. In war the instrument of propaganda becomes most effective. It must be used to stiffen resistance at home by the skilful selection, presentation, and even distortion of facts; it must conciliate neutral opinion and demoralise the enemy. The last war saw propaganda in its most intensive form; and in the last year of the war a propaganda department was established at Crewe House under the directorship of Lord Northcliffe. Leaflets, wireless telegraphy, films and news agencies were all employed for propaganda purposes; and propaganda became a vital instrument of policy, working carefully in relation to that policy.

Perhaps the most common form of propaganda in our everyday life is to be found in advertising; and yet an advertisement is so obviously propagandist that an immediate resistance is created in the individual. It is in overcoming this "sales resistance" that modern advertisers have displayed most ingenuity. When presentation of

facts and their constant repetition fail to have effect, the advertiser becomes a psychologist. By associating his commodity with the commonest human instincts—pride, fear, greed, snobbery—he immediately enlists the unconscious sympathy of his reader. He may create a sense of gratitude by the bestowal of free samples; he may flatter and encourage the unsuccessful with graphic picture stories of success gained overnight; he may appeal to the herd instinct, or to the instinct to be different, or to a group, such as the “over forties.”¹ So considerable has been the growth of publicity agents, so frequent has been the intrusion of “write ups” into the editorial columns, so diverse have become the channels open to the advertiser, that few of us can claim to be immune from the attacks of the advertiser. Our only refuge is an apathy and an indifference which rejects all advertisement with scorn.

We have seen in a previous chapter the various influences which control the Press, the influence of proprietor, of editor and of advertiser. It cannot be too much emphasised that it is in the selection, presentation and interpretation of news that propaganda can be most effective; and that as long as any paper has to reconcile what are frequently conflicting interests, we cannot hope for an impartial statement of fact. This is all the more important when we realise that ninety-five households out of every hundred buy a morning paper, and when we realise the implicit faith which the average reader puts in the printed word.

In the last twenty-five years the instruments of propaganda have increased considerably. The rapid development of means of communication, in serving to break down the barriers of time and distance, have tended towards a standardisation of thought and behaviour in the world. It is significant that both film and wireless programmes are mass produced, catering for the mob and not for

¹ For a brilliant discussion of these points see *Culture and Environment* by Leavis and Thompson.

the individual. The film as an instrument of propaganda has not only the advantage of its graphic and visual nature, but is the more powerful since its appeal is to a most suggestible section of the community. Whilst the amount of direct advertisement shown in any cinema is limited by the reactions of its patrons, we have already noticed¹ that every American film is an excellent piece of propaganda for America. It must exert a considerable influence over habits of dress, speech, and behaviour; and the conception of life outside their own circle which most people hold will probably be found to be derived from the film. Broadcasting, too,² can be a most effective weapon, for it acknowledges no territorial limits. In spite of a careful allocation of wave lengths piracy is still fairly common; whilst those states who make the most extensive use of propaganda broadcasting have not signed the 1938 Convention, which was aimed at the prevention of broadcasts likely to harm international goodwill. Recently the British Government has been driven to defend its interests by news broadcasts in foreign languages, and in the crisis of September 1938 this probably proved one of the most effective factors in preventing war. There is a certain amount of publicity given to official and semi-official activities and achievements, which does little harm; but there has recently been considerable criticism of the tenor of the B.B.C.'s news broadcasts.

England is particularly rich in voluntary associations, most of which are actively propagandist. Such bodies as the Public Morality Council, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the League of Nations Union, use every method to spread their ideas. Public meetings, conferences, journals, leaflets, ballots, petitions, summer and week-end schools, are but a few of the devices employed. Some of the more disinterested associations, such as Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.), perform

¹ See Chapter XXI.

² See Chapter XXIII.

most valuable work perhaps too unobtrusively; whilst others, such as the Suffragettes, achieve their ends by more vociferous means. On the other hand the activities of such organisations as those of the munition manufacturers in favour of increased expenditure on armaments is a public scandal. By lobbying, control of the press, and the employment of special agents they are able to obstruct all international attempts to limit armaments.¹

There is a considerable amount of propaganda, both direct and indirect, in education. The religious teaching in denominational schools is avowedly propagandist; whilst pupils in all state schools are subject to patriotic propaganda, on such occasions as the celebration of Empire Day, and often more deliberately in the teaching of history. The stranglehold of the examination system and the attitude of examiners to vital questions of politics and economics tends to emphasise the orthodox and conventional approach to such questions. Most public schools propagate a social code, a suppression of individualism, and a class-distinction which largely account for the attitude of the governing classes. It is however to the credit of our university system that university teachers are free to hold what views they like, and that a progressive like H. J. Laski still holds a chair in the University of London. Whilst most university extension work is often "impartial" to the extent of being capitalist propaganda, such organisations as the Workers Educational Association and the National Council of Labour Colleges have rejected the idea of impartiality. The recent growth of Book Clubs represents a particularly powerful form of propaganda, for since the amount spent on books by any one person is strictly limited, the tendency is to discourage independent judgment and to stereotype the reading matter of the public.

¹ As in the case of William Baldwin Shearer at the Naval Disarmament Conference of 1927.

Censorship is a negative form of propaganda and its main purpose seems to be to prevent the writer from flouting the established social and religious conventions. Often as public opinion becomes more tolerant and enlightened, the censor's ban is lifted; but the idea that progressive literature, drama, and films may do valuable work in educating public opinion is apparently discounted. Much criticism has been made of the decisions of the British Board of Film Censors, which is a semi-official body representative of the film trade; but it is unlikely that a government censorship would be any more tolerant. There is a growing tendency to circumvent censorship by the production of plays in private theatres, or theatre clubs, or in the case of films either by private performance or by an appeal to local authorities. Although no official censorship of books exists, publishers are notoriously cautious, and the mental outlook of those who control the circulating libraries largely conditions the type of book which reaches the public.

There has been a large increase in the amount of Government propaganda since the war. The Comintern, operating through National Communist parties throughout the world, and making considerable use of broadcasting, has endeavoured to spread communist ideas and to form a united front of progressive parties against Capitalism. This has resulted in intensive counter-propaganda by the totalitarian states; and Germans and Italians living abroad are now organised in local groups or cells, which are essentially propagandist organisations. The growth of cheap popular travel has led to tourist propaganda, to escorted semi-official tours, and to vacation courses at universities. Even the Olympic Games have been used by Germany to enhance her national prestige, whilst state control or subsidisation of news agencies means that biased news reports can be disseminated to the press of the world. The internal organisation of propaganda in these states

is even more intensive. The picked minority which is the party is the vanguard of the propagandist army, which is fed by the various youth organisations. Ministers of Propaganda exist both in Germany and Italy, and control radio, press, films and theatre. Pageantry and ceremonial are called in as valuable aids to propaganda, as in the Nuremberg party rallies, and the frequent use of plebiscites; whilst public discontent can be usefully diverted by the staging of a public trial; for the people must be given scapegoats, whether they be Jews or Communists.

"Propaganda," says Dr. Goebbels, "should not be in the least respectable; nor should it be mild or humble; it should be successful." There are certain conditions which govern the success or failure of the weapon. Some predisposition in the victim towards the point of view propagated is essential; whilst it is noticeable that propaganda is most successful when traditions and habits have broken down, as in the stress of war or revolution. Education, as it exists to-day, is more of an aid to, than an antidote for, propaganda; and unless we have a universal system of higher education there seems little hope that it will prove an effective vaccine. Since propaganda relies so largely on the herd instinct, it is probable that we must look to a sturdy individualism, to a further realisation of the value of independent thought and action, as the main limiting factor against an instrument with such a wide appeal as propaganda.

CHAPTER XXVII

DESIGN

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of design in daily life. We can, if we choose, ignore the cinema or the theatre; we can regard serious reading as a waste of time and music as an entertainment for the few. But we cannot ignore design, for to-day every aspect of our lives is surrounded by design. The houses in which we live, the streets in which we walk, the buildings in which we work, are all part of the design of our everyday life. Yet, of all the arts, design has been, until recently, the most neglected. We have grown so accustomed to an absence of design, to a lack of planning, to the idea that good design is an expensive luxury, that we do ignore what design there is. How many of us, walking along a street, raise our eyes above the level of the nearest shop window, or stop to consider that the street should have, and may have, a unity of its own? For the twentieth century has no tradition of design and only gradually is it beginning to develop one. All art is a direct reflection of a social, political or religious background; and it is a symptom of the disturbed condition of our age that design is in such a chaotic state to-day.

Yet the eighteenth century had style. Its teapots and its furniture belonged to it; they reflected the culture of the age. The ornament of the eighteenth century, like all good ornament, was the product of handwork, not the superimposed façade of the machine. The Industrial Revolution and the advent of the machine destroyed the style of the eighteenth century; and the Victorian era

had no style in any of the arts which were affected by the development of the machine. The Victorians saw that the machine could produce more things more cheaply than the old handworker; and so they designed for machine reproduction. Their products had all the monotony of the early days of mass production; and to distinguish themselves still further from the masses, the rich, in their snobbery, demanded hand-made goods. The test of good taste was that an article should be as ornate as possible, so sewing machines were adorned with gilt transfers, railway stations appeared in the fancy dress of Greek temples, and the Victorian drawing-room was savage with decoration.

The result of designing for machine reproduction was that there followed a divorce between the designer and his medium, a gap between the designer and producer. Victorian designers realised only that the machine was capable of rapid, economic and large-scale reproduction: they realised that machine-made products could not have the characteristics of a hand product, but they did not see that they could have an artistic quality of their own. It was left for this century to design for the machine, to insist that the function of the designer was to control the whole process of production from the original conception of his design to its marketing. The nineteenth century set out to beat the machine, and so William Morris inaugurated a revival of handicrafts. But the machine can produce more beautiful objects at lower cost than any method of hand production; and we must rid ourselves of the prejudice that all hand-made products are necessarily good, and all machine-made products necessarily bad.

It was this blinkered attitude of mind which produced the cult of the antique, and which was responsible for so much of the dishonest design of the last thirty years. Thus we copied the Tudor style; but the beams which the Elizabethans had used as essential structural elements

became merely decorative in our sham Tudor villas and inns. Leaded windows were originally necessary because only small panes of glass were obtainable; now strips of lead are used as decoration, and shut out a large percentage of light. An age which could not construct flat roofs had perforce to use gables: now they are an added "selling point" to our Tudoristic villa. This misuse of structural elements as decorative motifs is typical of an age which has no style of its own. It is, to borrow a phrase from a great architect, beautifying building, and not building beautifully. For the essential of all good design is that it should be both honest and beautiful; that it should confess its purpose honestly, that it should be of honest construction and material, and that its beauty should not be a beauty of the past but a new beauty, honestly reflecting the age which it represents.

Much has been done in this direction, but much is still to be done. There is, for instance, wide scope for design and planning in our towns and villages. Until the eighteenth century town and country were closely related, and the average town was a market town. Recently attempts have been made to repair the cleavage between the two which the industrial age produced by building the garden suburb, an uncontrolled assembling of ill-assorted houses. Yet at a time when the destruction of the countryside is a growing evil, it is all the more important to keep the town as a town, and the country as country. Towns, above all, should be compact, and houses arranged in compact units, and this can often be achieved with a growing population by expanding upwards. Streets, too, should be a unit, designed right through their length as a whole; the skyline should preserve a horizontal unity, which the craze for gables has done so much to destroy. The proportions of the street should be governed by the practical consideration of its function—its uses, the amount of traffic it will have to bear, whether it is a

shopping centre or a passage. But a planned street will be useless unless its order is maintained by restrictions upon all who build or occupy or use the street, and upon those who supply the furniture of the street. The Post Office, with its telephone kiosks, and its letter boxes, has done much to preserve the beauty of the street; but lamp-posts, trolley bus standards and public lavatories still remind us of the Victorian love of elaboration. We seem to-day to have lost the art of building streets, such as the Regent Street of Nash, because we see only the dread monotony of the slum street. But some of the more recent housing estates have streets which are streets, dignified and beautiful, possessing a unity of their own.

On the other hand many municipal housing schemes perpetuate the evils of the last century. Often they are under the control, not of an architect, but of the borough surveyor or engineer. Often they are so far from the centre of work that the gain in improved housing is offset by the increased cost of travel and maintenance. Perhaps the most beneficial attempts at rehousing the people have been the building of large blocks of flats, such as those at Quarry Hill, Leeds. Here, too, an attempt is made to create a community centre, a social organism, rather than to build a number of houses without social amenities. Shops, cinemas, churches, public houses, should all be part of the new building schemes, for only so can ordered planning be maintained. And such buildings, like all public buildings, should be built for their functions, they should express their purpose. Churches need no longer cling to an out-worn Gothic tradition, but should reflect something of the spirit of the age which gave them birth. In many places, indeed, this century has been the first to produce a real architecture for work. Some of the new schools, factories, and offices are models of what such buildings should be; Boots' factory at Beeston and the

pithead baths erected by the Miners' Welfare Committee are both fine examples. Buildings for pleasure had a difficult tradition to overthrow—that of the rococo—and it still lingers on in many theatres and most pier pavilions. But such theatres as that at Stratford-on-Avon, many cinemas, and quite a number of seaside pavilions show that not much imitation rococo is being built to-day. It seems that we are developing a new architecture for pleasure, as well as an architecture for work.

We cannot be so optimistic about the house. There is still the unhealthy craving for the past, for timber frames on top of brick. Most people still regard a house as a façade, and buy it for its fittings. Yet the plan is the very essence of the house, and the plan must control appearance. For, in the words of Le Corbusier, a house is "a machine for living in", and it should reflect that function. It should be fitted around the social habits of its inhabitants; and the three prime essentials are light, air, and space. We have already seen the effect of modern leaded windows; metal frames waste far less light than wooden ones, although cheap metal frames are liable to rust. Light furniture, light colours, plain walls and carpets all add to the sense of light and space. The aspect, whilst obviously south in theory, must be modified by the conditions of those who live in the house. A south living room is not of much use to people who are out at work all day. The majority of houses are grossly underlit even by electric light. We should aim at a sufficiency of light wherever it is wanted; so that our system of lighting should not be one central light or set of lights, carefully shaded from the ceiling, but two lighting systems: one a general diffused light, and the other localised lights for special purposes. As for air, it must be remembered that an open fire is an automatic ventilator; and if we substitute gas or electric fires we must devise alternative methods of

ventilation. Space may be achieved by having one large living room instead of two small rooms; by using as much built-in, and low unit furniture as possible; and by the general colour scheme of the room.

It is not suggested that we should aim at new designs merely because they are new. The blatantly original design, original merely for the sake of being original, is as much to be deplored as any craze for the antique. Entirely new designs are only necessary when the article has a new function to perform, or when a new material or a new method of manufacture has been found. Subtle modifications are to be preferred to radical alterations; and we should aim at the moderation expressed in the motto of the Design and Industries Association "Fitness for purpose, pleasantness in use".

There has been considerable progress in design. Germany was the leader in the industrial arts until the advent of Hitler; now she has lost many of her best designers, even those who are not Jews. Russia has repudiated new design as bourgeois, and returned to the nineteenth century pseudo-style. It is to be hoped that political changes in the one, and the achievement of maturity in the other, will allow these countries to come into line with the rest of Europe. For there more progress has been made; Le Corbusier has dominated French architecture and made it some of the finest in the world; Sweden has contributed exquisite handcraft, especially in glass; Finland has produced the best cheap furniture. England has a number of voluntary bodies working for better design, such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the Design and Industries Association, and the Modern Architectural Research group. In 1934 the Board of Trade established the Council for Art and Industry to deal with questions affecting the relations between art and industry; and in the same year it established the National Register of Industrial Art Designers, whose object is to maintain and

improve the standard of design. The government, local authorities, and semi-public bodies are all showing themselves to be aware of these new trends; and it looks as if out of the chaos of the last century we may achieve an honest design.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PUNISHMENT

THE civilisation of a country may well be judged by its ideas of punishment. Human progress is at best an uncertain conception, but in our attitude towards penology we can at least claim some progress during the last two thousand years. The cold blooded vengeance of Old Testament morality has been replaced by a more humane and more reasonable attitude towards the criminal. Yet it is surprising how recent this development has been. The tortures of the Inquisition, although they might arouse the indignation of the Elizabethans, were commonplaces of medieval life; whilst punishments in Stuart England were ferocious and revolting. The eighteenth century, with all its culture, was for the miscreant the age of transportation; and until late in the nineteenth century the principle of deterrence predominated.

Many theories of punishment have been put forward in their time, and are, indeed, held widely enough to-day. One vexed question is to what extent it is the function of the state to punish breaches of the moral law, and how far the purpose of punishment is the expiation of moral wrong-doing. This theory, popular as it has been, implies the infliction of pain for a breach of law, irrespective of the circumstances of the crime—a corollary to which few judges would subscribe to-day. Moreover, it places upon the judge the delicate duty of assessing the amount of pain necessary to expiate the moral guilt involved. The whole theory is based upon a confusion between ethics

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and law, between morality and legality. For a breach of moral law may be committed by a state of mind alone, which no man-made law is competent to recognise. Almost as widely held, although less popular, is the retributive theory of punishment. The idea, largely traditional in its origin, is based upon the need to give expression to society's hatred of crime, to what Lord Oxford has described as the ethical resentment of the community. On the other hand there is comparatively little public resentment to-day against the majority of criminals, and society is rapidly outgrowing the custom of private revenge. The theory is open to the same practical objection as that of expiation, since there exists no satisfactory standard for measuring the amount of pain inflicted; whilst the responsibility for the infliction of pain solely to equalise a debt against society is a large one. Perhaps the most generally accepted theory of punishment is that of deterrence. It is suggested that punishment should have as its main aim the deterrence of both the offender and others from future crime. Whilst in theory there may be a considerable argument for this point of view, it is not substantiated by the lesson of history. In the nineteenth century the severity of our penal code did not deter the criminal; rather it brutalised him, and by its very severity encouraged the commission of the more serious crimes. In practice, the theory of deterrence is ignored by all those judges who place offenders upon probation, or impose purely nominal sentences; whilst it has been pointed out that since minor offences are more common than serious crimes, the logical outcome of the deterrent theory would be to impose heavier penalties for the lighter offences.

The idea that punishment should have as its main object the reformation of the criminal has much to recommend it. It satisfies our humane instincts, and it shows a consideration for the well-being of both criminal and

community. Mr. Leo Page has argued¹ that, in spite of these obvious merits, the reformatory theory cannot be accepted as the sole, or even the main, purpose of punishment, since it is not universally applicable. He points out that there unfortunately exists a class of criminals beyond hope of reformation. He would suggest as an alternative the protection of society as the main aim of punishment. Deterrence and reformation are valuable means towards this end of the protection of society, for it is obviously to the advantage of the state to make good citizens out of all its members. But if deterrence has proved unavailing, and reformation impossible, then the protection of society demands that the criminal concerned should be forcibly restricted from pursuing his activities. Whilst this may appear to be but a restatement of "salus populi, suprema lex," its implications are important. For it means that the confirmed criminal should be confined during the pleasure of the people, confined, not perhaps under existing methods of penal servitude, but in such a way and for such a period that there is no possibility of his ever again being able to prey upon society. The idea may appear extreme; but its application will depend so largely upon the individual case, and upon the knowledge of penology of the bench, that abstract criticism is difficult, if not futile. As Mr. Page indicates, if different courts and different judges hold varying views of the duty of the bench, then injustice must ensue. Punishment must be adequate to protect society, neither more nor less; and unless a judge is fully aware of the nature of the punishment which he proposes to inflict, then he is not fulfilling his duty efficiently.

Much must be left to the discretion and knowledge of the judge, for the infliction of punishment, what has been called "the frightful task of passing sentence", is difficult enough. Since our object is to protect society we must

¹ In *Crime and the Community*, Faber and Faber, 1937.

induce a preference for law abidingness among the people. Uniform severity is ineffective, as we have seen; undue leniency betrays the trust to society, and does little good to the offender. Yet there may be individual circumstances which prompt the judge to exercise his discretion in favour of the offender. Generalisations are thus by no means wholly valid, but a few general principles may be suggested. There has recently been an increase in juvenile delinquency in this country, and it has been suggested that the increase is due to undue leniency in treatment. What has been overlooked by those who urge sterner measures is that the high birth rates just after the war have meant that there are more juveniles to commit misdemeanours; and that there is a greater readiness to punish juveniles now that there are special courts and special methods available for their punishment. Again and again the Home Office has protested against the excessive number of juveniles committed to prison; but justices, priding themselves on their hardness of heart, have still persisted in this practice. Not only does the imprisonment of most young offenders tend rather to confirm them in a life of crime, since they are, in the provinces at least, allowed to mix with the more hardened criminals; but the sentences are often too short for any reformation of character, or training in industry, to be effective, and yet long enough for them to lose their jobs, and become disgruntled unemployed. If we have the interests of the community at heart, surely it is better to preserve the potential earning power of these young delinquents. For the minor offences, a system of license or probation would be effective; it would act as a deterrent, and it would give the offender another chance. More hardened cases might be confined in special institutions, for periods long enough for them to learn a trade in preparation for their release. Such a procedure would entail a more adequate probation service, the officers of which are often part time, and generally grossly underpaid.

It might involve a state probation service, just as we have to-day a state prison service. And it would mean the building of special detentive institutions with adequate facilities for industrial training. Yet the eventual gain to the community in the productivity of the reformed offenders would justify the expense.

The treatment of the ordinary criminal, too, demands some reform. We must regard him as a human being, and realise that he normally lives an abnormal life. Reform therefore should be designed not so much to make him happy or comfortable, as to make him normal. The existing system of rigid discipline, of confinement within twenty foot walls, of privilege and "stage" gained only after months of abnormal seclusion, tends to destroy just those very qualities of self reliance and sociability which the prisoner will need on release. As with juveniles, the short sentence is completely ineffective for training either in character or industry; whilst the tendency has been to stress production on an economic scale rather than preparation for future work. Thus much of the labour in prison is elementary and of little use to the prisoner after his release. Nor, as has been shown at Wakefield, is it necessary always to keep prisoners in close confinement, for it is not sufficiently realised that to all but the most hardened cases, the loss of liberty is in itself punishment enough. Local prisons are too small to allow effective segregation; on the other hand most convict prisons are too large for any effective personal relationship to be established with the prisoner. There is thus a need for a number of new prisons, situated in healthy localities, affording ample facilities for the recreation of prisoners, and adequately equipped with the machinery necessary for training in industry. But above all, where the offence is serious enough to warrant imprisonment, then sentences of sufficient length to make training possible are essential.

In 1935 10,000 people were imprisoned for periods of fourteen days or less; the cost to the state was considerable, the benefit either to delinquents or to the community was negligible.

There are of course those who are beyond human redemption. That they should be imprisoned for comparatively short periods, and then released to prey upon the community until they are again arrested is both illogical and anti-social. They should be treated as are the mentally deranged to-day, and confined permanently, under conditions which are severe without being harsh. Similarly the state has a right to extend its conception of the public safety to such lengths as to demand the execution of a murderer. Those who oppose capital punishment usually do so on the ground that it outrages the feelings of the community; but the only alternative in this country is imprisonment for life—i.e. for ten to fifteen years. To counter the argument of its irrevocability, one might point out the high proportion of reprieves, and the absence of any proof that an innocent person has been hanged during this century. Other countries who have abolished capital punishment have alternatives much more severe than ours. In view of the recent advances made in psychiatry and psychology it is unlikely that persons of mental instability will be executed. Whilst we cannot deny that the death penalty does throw a false glamour over a murder trial, that an execution has a depressing effect upon the tone of a prison, and that juries are hesitant to return a verdict of guilty in view of the consequences of such a verdict, we must not overlook the interests of the victims and the community. The comparatively few murders committed in recent years is ample evidence of the effectiveness of the death penalty; and to substitute for it a lengthy period of imprisonment, would be to encourage the murder of any unfortunate who happened to witness a serious crime. Whether

execution by hanging is justifiable to-day is another question; it still savours too much of retribution, and there are presumably less painful and equally effective methods.

The same humane objection is often advanced against corporal punishment: and it is denounced as being degrading both to the punished and the punisher. Evidence is available, however, that the increase in the use of corporal punishment is an effective deterrent;¹ a medical certificate of fitness to receive punishment is essential before infliction; and those who are so sentenced are generally so hardened, or so depraved, that no further degradation is possible. There is not so much to be said for corporal punishment of young offenders. For such punishment to be effective there must be a personal relationship between the offender and the officer who inflicts the punishment corresponding to the relationship between father and son, or schoolmaster and pupil. But the isolated birching of a boy, without any attempt to influence the character of the boy afterwards, will only arouse a resentment against the officer and a grudge against society.

Some idea of the importance of the problem of crime and punishment may be gauged if we realise that the estimated cost of crime in this country is in the neighbourhood of £35,000,000 a year. This probably errs on the conservative side, as no estimation is possible of the loss to the state of the productivity of criminals, or of police officers. Reform of the prison system, although originally expensive, should materially reduce this charge, but only if it is accompanied by radical reforms in our courts of summary jurisdiction. We have seen that it is the justices, legally untrained and in no way socially conditioned, who have opposed suggestions for reform. Each year courts of summary jurisdiction pass some half million sentences; and whilst justices may consult their clerks on points of

¹ Page, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

law, the responsibility for sentence is solely theirs. It is their ignorance, rather than their ill-will, which is at the root of the matter; and unless there occurs a reform from within, there is always the possibility of a general revision of our system of summary jurisdiction.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PROBLEM OF LEISURE

THE fundamental problem of leisure in the twentieth century is that there is to-day more leisure, and more ways of spending it. The increase in the general level of education, and so in the awareness and self-consciousness of the people, the decline in the possibilities of improving one's status, and the growth in the nature and extent of the demands made by the people, have all served to make the question of leisure one of the most urgent problems of the day. Under an economic system which depends upon factory production everything must be subordinated to work. And so it was in the interests of increased productivity that the employers of labour favoured the reduction of holidays and saints' days, and opposed those leisure activities, such as drinking, which tended to interfere with efficiency. A traditional suspicion of leisure grew up; the Victorians regarded unremitting labour as the greatest of virtues, and welcomed religion as a social cement which taught the workers acceptance of their lot and deference to their betters. Leisure was interpreted in terms of idleness, and "The Devil finds work for idle hands to do".

When the facilities available for the leisure of the people proved insufficient, it was the manufacturer and the squire who used their patronage to establish those facilities. But the aristocratic tradition of England was to mean that no rich urban culture developed as it did in the cities of central Europe, and that the spontaneous emergence of popular artistic and intellectual pursuits was discouraged. What organisations for leisure existed

in the nineteenth century were patronised organisations, created by the nobility, who thus determined the popular attitude towards leisure. Thus whilst the squire would give his patronage to the innocent amusement of his villagers, the town was left to languish without corporate social activities.

The last forty years have however seen considerable changes in leisure. Occupational changes and the decrease in the amount of heavy manual work have left the worker less tired when his day's work is done. The increase in real wages, the smaller families of the middle classes particularly, and the use of public funds for the provision of recreation have provided the people with the money, the time and the opportunity for the fuller use of leisure. This problem is especially acute with the middle classes, who possess these attributes of energy, money and time to a higher degree than the workers, but are unable to indulge their tastes as the wealthier classes do. There has been, too, a tendency towards the democratisation of leisure. New and wider varieties of food, and the increase in the number of popular restaurants have provided a higher level of common comfort, and have produced not only a physical but a mental mobility. People are becoming more companionable, and there is less reserve towards strangers. This tendency is strengthened by the great variety of cheap mass produced clothes, which help to minimise class distinctions. Rich and poor travel together in bus and tube, and the motor bus is a fine solvent of class consciousness. We move about more freely and more cheaply, our contacts with persons and ideas are fuller; our mental outlook has become dynamic. Yet there is an obverse side to this picture; it may be a cause for regret that our houses are built rather for sleeping in than living in, and that the tendency to easy mobility has helped to destroy the intimate relations within the home. One may argue with Dean Inge that we have mistaken comfort for

civilisation; or it may be urged that the rush and hurry of modern life, the "civilisation of movement", is nothing more than a physical reflection of our mental instability.

Perhaps the most important feature of modern leisure is the growth of large private companies providing for the recreation of the people, the "machinery of amusement". The impact of the cinema upon contemporary life and manners must be considerable. We have seen that some fourteen million people visit the cinema weekly; and it has been estimated¹ that thirty to forty per cent of the children of the country visit a cinema at least once a week. More boys than girls, and, rather surprisingly, more men than women, are to be found among the average audience. The working classes spend more of their time, and a considerably larger part of their income, in the cinemas than do the professional classes. Various surveys of the contents of films exhibited have been made, and the general conclusions derived from them may be taken to be fairly representative. There seems little doubt that the film tends to emphasise standards of living far beyond the level of the audience. The majority of films depict wealthy residences; their characters are frequently the idle rich, who seize every opportunity to appear in formal evening or morning dress. In very few films is the ordinary labourer shown as anything other than background figure. In very few cases are the characters motivated by anything other than purely personal or domestic ends; whilst illicit love and crime form the predominant subject matter of the film. This tendency to over-emphasise sex, to glorify crime and the gangster, to ignore the realities and stress an artificial luxury, cannot be without its effect. And, since the impact of the film must be dependent on the strength of the counteracting agencies at work, it is obvious that it is the working classes, not trained to any

¹ D. Durant, *The Problem of Leisure*, Routledge, 1938, p. 115, to which book I am indebted for the following figures and conclusions.

degree of critical awareness, not open to the moderating influences of sound books and logical thought, upon whom this impact is most uncontrolled.

The social effect of the theatre and broadcasting is less easily ascertained. The theatre is still largely the preserve of the moneyed class; and whilst there will always be an impecunious minority who respond to the cheaper prices now being introduced in the theatre, it is likely that the majority will prefer the cinema. The greater cheapness and comfort, the continuous performance and the greater variety of fare provided, are overwhelming advantages for the cinema. Only in a few little known theatres, such as Unity Theatre, does there appear any active participation of a working class audience in the actual production of a play; and whilst the Westminster, the Gate, and the Embassy theatres all perform valuable work, there are too few of such theatres for their influence to be really effective. In broadcasting the absence of any large scale listeners' research makes anything more than surmise impossible. It has probably added to a considerable extent to the attractions of the home; it has certainly encouraged a real love of music among the people; it is open to the danger, in common with the press and the cinema, that it may lead to a standardisation of thought and outlook. It is unlikely to prove a formidable rival to the cinema, for whilst its entertainment is cheaper, it does not engross the attention as the film does, and only partially provides that escape from reality which appears to be the insistent demand of those who pursue leisure.

We see this same desire to escape, to live in the luxurious world of our imagination, in the intrusion of gambling into sport. It may not be generally realised that the estimated attendances at football matches played under the three codes in this country is in excess of fifty millions a year; or that the gate money totals more than £2,500,000. The size of transfer fees alone shows how commercialised

association football has become; but the effect of this commercialisation is negligible when we consider the finances of gambling. It has been estimated that more than fifty million pounds a year is spent in football pools, representing the endeavours of some ten million persons. No statistical arguments, no demonstration of the laws of probability, will avail with those who regard their contribution to the pools as a regular item in the weekly budget. In betting on horse racing the annual turnover is about £400,000,000,¹ whilst greyhound racing admittedly could not exist without betting. Yet, harmful as the social effects may be, it is difficult to criticise this escape into excitement which often affords the only hope to thousands of appallingly monotonous lives.

A more positive and less harmful, although hardly adequate, opportunity for leisure is provided by the facilities for physical recreation which now exist. The National Playing Fields Association has done good work; yet every day sports grounds are being swallowed up by builders, at the rate of 1,700 acres a year in London alone. Many elementary schools have inadequate sports grounds, whilst only a few rural parishes possess land suitable for organised recreation. The Youth Hostels Association and the Camping Club of Great Britain have shown the way; but we are still far behind Germany in our drive for physical fitness. The recent government move in this direction has unfortunately come at a time when the real need is not so much for more play as for more food. On the whole it must be admitted that we move more out into the country, that we enter more actively into physical recreation, than we did a generation ago; but progress is lamentably slow. Youth movements, such as Scouts, Boys' Brigades and Boys' Clubs have all helped, not only to improve the physical standard of the nation's youth,

¹ Durant significantly contrasts this with our annual milk bill of £100,000,000.

but to organise the leisure activities of the young. Yet it is doubtful whether any of these movements have really attracted boys from predominantly working class homes; whilst there is always the danger of too much organisation. In youth movements abroad, indeed, we see a deliberate attempt by controlling leisure to form the dominant social note of the next generation; whilst youth movements in their turn are deliberately using their leisure to affect public policy.

It has frequently been suggested that civilisation demands the existence of a leisured class, who will be the custodians of culture. This also presupposes the existence of a semi-slave population, which will maintain the leisured class in their luxury. Thus the much vaunted democracy of fifth century Athens was democratic only for the Athenian citizen, and not for the majority of helots. One of the distinguishing features of the leisure activities of the nineteenth century was their philanthropic and patronal origin; but the twentieth century is seeing the displacement of the leisured class as the promoters of culture. Their function, essential enough, is being performed by the workers, who now have the time and the energy for the pursuit of leisure. It may be that this democratisation of leisure, as with the press, the cinema, and the radio, will result in a standardization of taste and outlook; that the tone of society and social intercourse will degenerate, and we shall arrive at the supremacy of the commonplace. The real problem is that most innovations in leisure to-day tend to induce passivity; and that we are too inclined to accept our amusements, with our clothes, ready made. This is, however, due not to any inherent defects of character, but to lack of opportunity and education. Our leisure is still organised from above, whether by those who direct the commercialised machinery of amusement, or by those who patronise our clubs. The present need is to arouse activity in leisure; to make films,

as well as to see them, to perform plays as well as to visit theatres. Local authorities already possess fairly comprehensive powers to form community centres, which alone will provide the real opportunity for individual development and social adjustment. If democracy is to be anything more than "a sentimental veil thrown over vulgarity," then it can only be so by a fuller development of the social consciousness.

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